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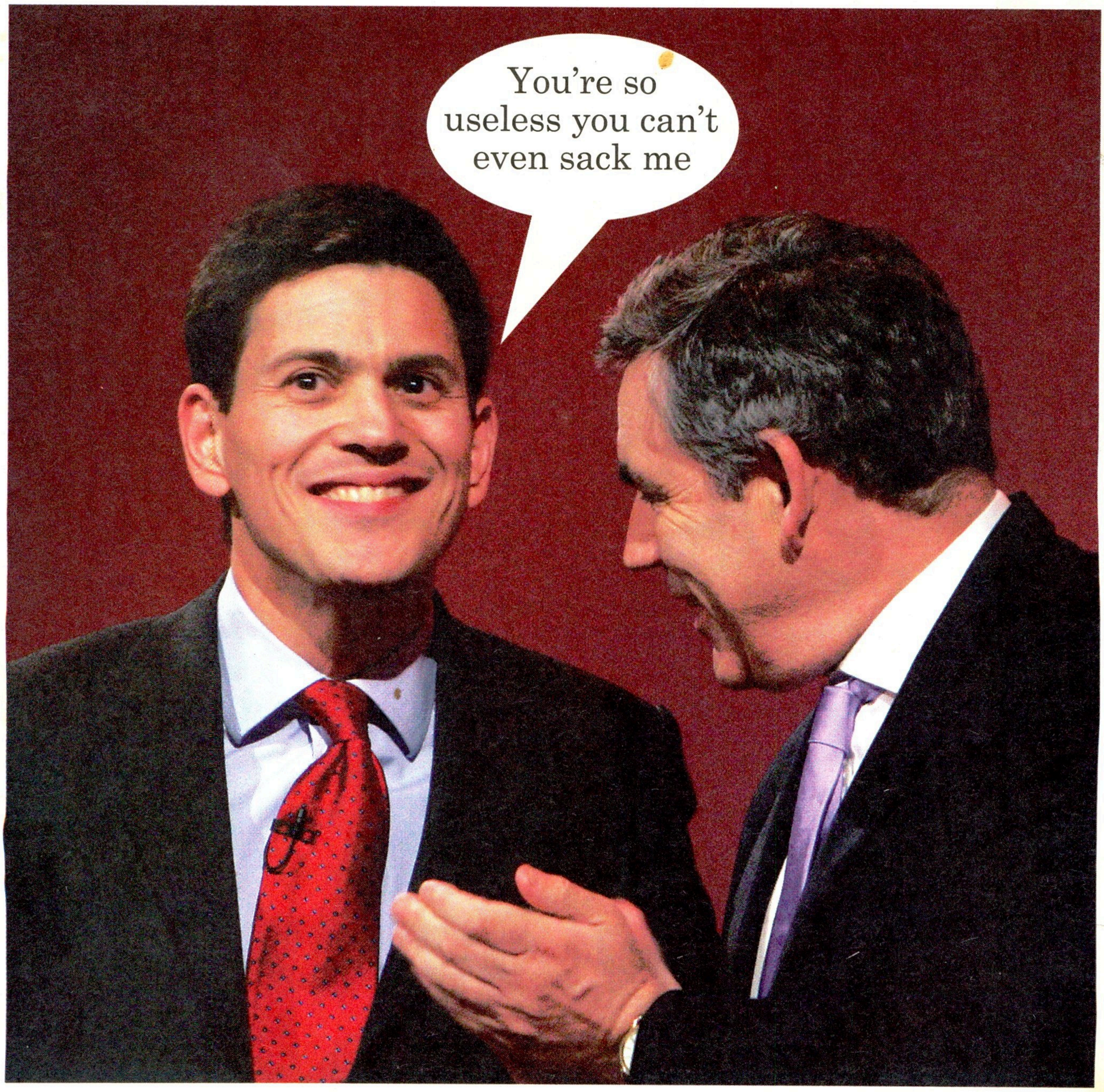

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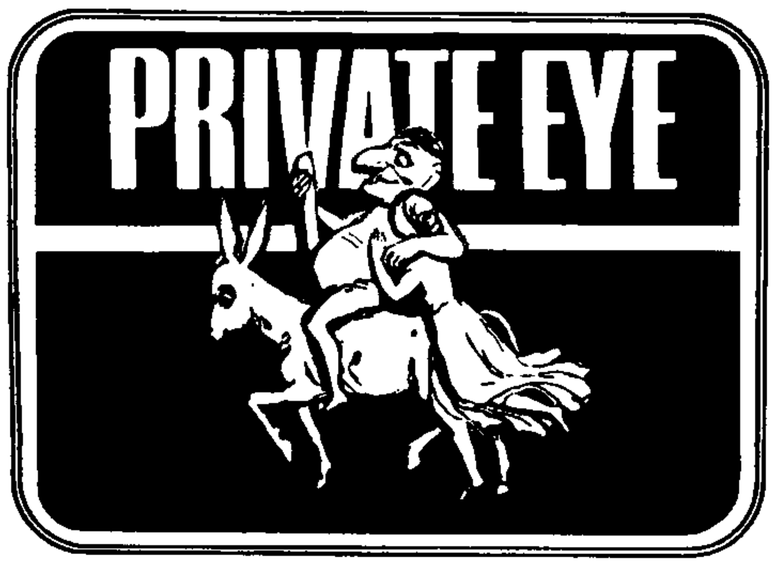

Olympian follies

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"So what's your secret, Steroidos?"

JUST FANCY THAT!

"It appears from reliable private information that Sir O. Mosley is a masochist of the extreme type in his sexual life."

– Diary entry by George Orwell, 29 August 1939.

"Frau Wagner saintlily gave me her ticket for *Rheingold* & I made Max [Mosley] go as he'd never heard it, & he was a bit shy of going alone to the Wagners' box… It appears he recovered enough to kick an American lady whose head he could reach with his toe through a curtain hanging in front of the box, he did this to punish her for rustling a sweet paper. He heard her whisper to her husband 'These *Germans*…'"

– Letter from Diana Mosley to her sister Deborah, 21 August 1960.

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PRIVATE EYE SUBSCRIPTIONS/SALES
PO Box 326, Sittingbourne, Kent ME9 8FA.
Subscription enquiries: 01795 414 871
Overseas: +44 (0) 1795 414 870 Fax: 01795 414 555.
Web: www.subsonline.co.uk
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SUBSCRIPTION RATES
£28 per annum. Europe and Eire £34. Airmail (rest of world) £38.
Cheques/POs to Private Eye. Mastercard/Visa.

ADVERTISING
Ten Alps Publishing, 9 Savoy Street, London WC2E 7HR.
Email: private-eye@tenalpspublishing.com
Display: 020 7878 2366 **Classified:** 020 7240 9129

Published by Pressdram Ltd, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN. **Printed** by BGP Ltd, Bicester OX6 7QZ. **Distributed** by P.E. Distributions, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN. 020 7437 4017.

ABC

TESCO CHEQUE OUT

FRESH from deciding the Max Moseley S&M case, Mr Justice Eady was back in the high court last week to administer a good hiding to Tesco in its ongoing libel battle against the *Guardian* after the paper wrongly claimed earlier this year that the grocer had avoided £1bn in corporation tax on a series of offshore property transactions. Although the deals were designed to avoid "stamp duty land tax", no corporation tax was dodged.

Unknown to the *Guardian*, which corrected and apologised for its story, Tesco *was* involved in two other substantial corporation tax avoidance schemes. As m'learned friends squared up, *Private Eye* exposed them (see issues 1211 and 1212).

The convoluted arrangements the *Eye* unearthed took in companies, partnerships and branches in Luxembourg, Switzerland, Hungary and Ireland. When the government outlawed one such scheme in its last budget, Treasury minister Jane Kennedy described it as "highly artificial tax avoidance". As Tesco was hoping to save many tens of millions of pounds every year through such blatant tax avoidance, the *Grauniad* was unsurprisingly eager to get the details before the libel courts.

Tesco was less keen to talk about them and with the help of lawyers from Carter Ruck went to bizarre lengths to argue that the newspaper shouldn't be allowed to use the schemes discovered by the *Eye* in its libel defence. The supermarket company had never claimed not to avoid corporation tax, insisted its QC Adrienne Page. Instead, she argued, "it is now more usual to divide 'tax avoidance' into aggressive and non-aggressive tax planning behaviour. The claimant would readily put itself into the second category, but not the first." Eady, none too convinced by this sophistry, sighed: "I'm grappling with the notion of passive tax avoidance."

Page also insisted that "planning or efficiency that results in tax being avoided" doesn't make it a "tax avoider as a slur". Next to its total tax bill, the amount avoided was "a drop in the ocean" and Tesco didn't avoid as much tax as some other big companies (even though the corporation tax and stamp duty land tax avoidance schemes it had already admitted set the exchequer back somewhere in the order of £100m, equivalent to a large hospital). That was also why Tesco chairman David Reid had been justified in telling his recent AGM that "Tesco is not a tax avoider", even though in court it admits that it, er, avoids tax.

Impressed? Mr Justice Eady certainly wasn't. He swiftly allowed the *Eye's* revelations to form part of the *Guardian's* case against Tesco's libel claim.

On a miserable day for the grocer's efforts to silence its critics, Eady also ordered Tesco's claim of "malicious falsehood" against the paper and its editor Alan Rusbridger to be suspended, dismissing it as merely "tactical", and told it to cough up costs. Next to the tax it avoids, however, even they will be a "drop in the ocean".

NUMBER CRUNCHING

£110 Maximum fine recommended by government for those who over-fill their wheelie bins

£75 On-the-spot fixed penalty for littering (making it more economical to chuck excess rubbish in the street instead)

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

IMMEDIATELY after the very first Old Bailey jury convicted Barry George in July 2001 of the 1999 murder of Jill Dando, the *Eye* asked how long it would take for the notoriously slow criminal justice system to put right an obvious miscarriage of justice.

The answer: two appeals, a retrial and seven long years. The two trials took different courses but the underlying facts remained the same. There was no weapon; no confession; no evidence of an obsession with Jill Dando; no motive; nothing to put George at her house at 11.30am when she was killed; and nothing to suggest he had the wherewithal to carry out an execution-style shooting.

The major flaw in evidence in both trials was deeply dodgy "identification" evidence. The only two eyewitnesses who saw a man hurry away immediately after the shooting did not identify George as "the man in the long coat".

The first trial turned on a tiny speck of firearms dust, which the defence expert at the time, Dr John Lloyd, easily explained as contamination and which later prosecution experts were forced to admit had been given a significance it did not merit.

Without that evidence, the second trial introduced women who had been stalked and intimidated by George – evidence excluded from the first trial.

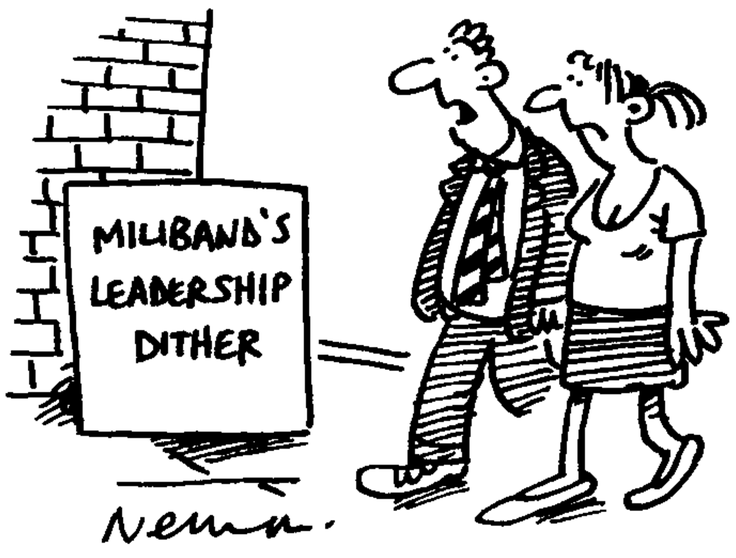
The second trial also heard far more evidence about George's disordered mental state and brain damage which cast serious doubt on his ability to function normally. His borderline intelligence and his inability to organise anything or switch from one task to another cast serious doubts on whether he could obtain a firearm, adapt it to muffle the sound and to escape justice for a year.

George was the local weirdo with a long history of pursuing women, including a conviction 25 years ago for attempted rape, which made him a suspect - but no more perhaps than the 140 other weirdos the police uncovered during their lengthy inquiries who actually did have a fixation with Jill Dando. As the jury finally decided, being "the local nutter" with a nasty history of sexual pursuit does not turn him into a cold-blooded killer. And it means that the real killer is still out there.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

IN A typically far-reaching interview for Sky News, hard-hitter Kay Burley managed to reduce "Woman E", dominatrix-for-hire and freelance camerawoman, to tears over her indiscretions with motorsport boss Max Mosley.

When asked what she would say to Mosley were she to meet him now, the apologetic and sorrowful Woman E replied: "I'd get on my knees and apologise." You can take the girl out of the "German prison scenario"…



"He's obviously got what it takes to be Prime Minister"

Street Of Shame

THE Guardian Media Group's latest annual report uses several buckets of whitewash to hide the tremendous feud within the company in the past year – the power struggle between *Guardian* editor Alan Rusbridger and his rival, Roger Alton, editor of sister paper the *Observer*.

"Roger Alton retired as editor of the *Observer*, having led the paper to an exceptional circulation performance in a turbulent market place," writes Dame Liz Forgan, chair of the Scott Trust, which oversees the two papers.

Piffle and balderdash. Alton had no intention of retiring, but was pressured to leave by Rusbridger and Forgan herself. There is a clue elsewhere in the GMG report, in this footnote: "Alan Rusbridger was appointed editor-in-chief of both the *Guardian* and the *Observer* in September 2007." That was one month before Alton resigned.

Meanwhile, Alton has shown how much he longed for "retirement" by, er, becoming editor of arch-rival the *Independent* at the first opportunity.

LIZ FORGAN also pays tribute in the GMG annual report to "a new house agreement with the National Union of Journalists, paving the way for new, more nimble working practices as we prepare to leave Farringdon Road for Kings Place".

Although she doesn't elaborate, the deal was for staff to get a 5 percent pay rise in exchange for giving up their right to a nine-day fortnight and embracing 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week shift patterns in the glorious multi-platform digital age.

But not everyone got a 5 percent pay rise. The section about directors' salaries in the GMG report shows that Alan Rusbridger, on £401,000, received a 13 percent salary hike, while finance director Nick Castro (£531,000) and chief executive Carolyn McCall (£827,000) did even better, with increases of 23 percent. Trebles all round!

THE *Daily Mail* is thrilled with its "brilliant new columnist" Jan Moir, whom it introduced with a front-page fanfare last Friday. But her former colleagues at the *Daily Telegraph* are rather less enamoured.

Last month the *Telegraph* made a mistake and overpaid Moir by two columns, which she graciously acknowledged. An agreement was reached whereby instead of reimbursing the paper she would write two more columns in July before decamping to the *Mail*. On the day before the first was due to appear, she spoke to Chris Deerin and Sally Chatterton in the *Telegraph* features department and agreed on her items.

The copy was due at 5pm. Nothing showed. When nothing had appeared by 6pm, Deerin sent her an urgent email – and was astonished to receive a reply from Moir saying she had been so badly treated by the *Telegraph* that she wouldn't write the two extra columns after all. Deerin rang to plead with her, but boyfriend Johnny said she was away and hadn't taken her mobile, so the *Telegraph* wallahs had to hastily fill the half-page gap with a left-over feature about the joys of Southwold.

Moir's debut column for the *Mail* last week was headlined "The female of the species is now just as deadly as the male", a sentiment which bitter *Telegraph* executives heartily endorse. They have taken the only revenge available to them: anyone visiting the *Telegraph* website and clicking on the link "Read more by Jan Moir" will find nothing but a blank screen.

"PORTUGUESE police knocked on just 443 doors in the failed hunt for missing Madeleine McCann," reports Lori Campbell in the *Sunday Mirror*. "Their investigation was last night branded 'pathetic' by her parents Kate and Gerry, who are furious police did not do more to find their daughter."

One reason the local Knackers couldn't spend more time pursuing house-to-house inquiries after the girl's disappearance was that they were sent down a blind alley by a British hackette who urged them to focus their inquiries on local Englishman Robert Murat. Lori Campbell – for it was she – informed police that the "creepy" Murat was behaving like Ian Huntley after the Soham murders.

He was innocent, of course – as Campbell's paper and the other tabloids have recently learned to their cost.

***NEWS of the World* columnist Carole Malone has condemned Max Mosley's penchant for "black, dark, deviant sex which is gangrenous to the soul and corrupts all who indulge in it".**

She certainly isn't shy about expressing her opinion, and thankfully has found a paper that allows her to rant about the "depravity" of men who "pay women to act out their sick fantasies".

No doubt then she would be appalled by the sort of rag that runs full-page adverts for smut merchants offering free DVDs with titles like *Girls Behind Bars – XXX exercise period*, *Dungeon Desire – hooked on action* and *18 & Ruder* – "It's hard to know what Sabrina's saying but you'll understand what she's doing".

These are just some of the "XXX Spectaculars" on offer from PrivateXXX, which promises the narrative-weary that "there's NO storyline… just FULL-BLOODED, NO HOLDS[sic] BARRED ADULT ACTION". And the journal of record that ran this offer? Why Malone's own *News of the World* of course.

JUST FANCY THAT!

"Exclusive: I killed Jill. Jill Dando's killer has finally admitted he shot her in a sensational cell block confession. Barry George, 41, has always protested his innocence. But without realising a tape machine was running, he blurted out in prison: 'I was the person who committed the murder'."

– News of the World, front page, 7/4/02.

"Exclusive: I didn't kill Jill Dando... I was stalking someone else at the time. My Story by Barry George."

– News of the World, front page, 3/8/08.

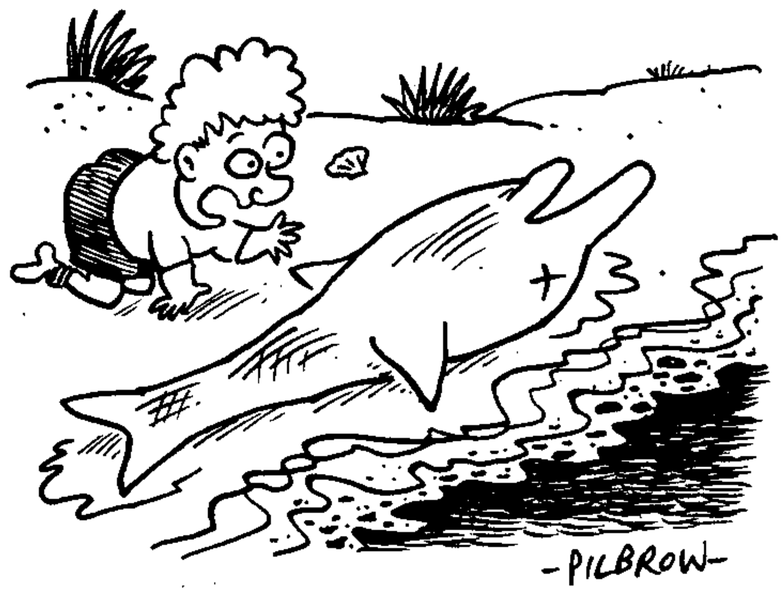
ARE you a showbiz editor with an awkward space to fill close to deadline? Then simply pluck the name of a singer from the air and claim they're recording the theme to the new Bond film! (NB: this also works with actors and the phrase "tipped to be the new Doctor Who".)

Last October the *Daily Star*'s Kim Dawson revealed that Amy Winehouse had been dumped by the Bond producers and replaced with Ville Valo of Finnish goth rockers HIM. But according to the *Mirror*'s 3am "girls", Leona Lewis was "almost certain" to get the job.

By February the *Sun*'s Pete Sampson claimed Winehouse was in pole position after all, and in April his colleague Gordon Smart confirmed a Winehouse/Mark Ronson dream team. Balls, said the *Sunday Express*, which in May tipped Beyoncé Knowles.

By June Sampson had caught up with the *Mirror*, with the *Sun* installing Lewis as the chosen one. However, the *Mirror* had by then decided Duffy was in competition with Winehouse. Then Smart and the *Sun* took another blind swing and came up with Annie Lennox.

Who was right? "We are delighted and pleased to have two such exciting artists as Jack White and Alicia Keys," announced Bond producer Barbara Broccoli on 30 July, confirming that all the hacks had Smershed it up.



"What is it Flipper? Tell me boy... they're pumping raw sewage straight into the sea?"

O·B·N

"The contrast between Brown and David Miliband could not have been more acute: there was David on Thursday, an Italian cloth jacket slung sexily over his athletic shoulders, his dark hair in a boyish crop, signing autographs with a flourish, oozing star quality from every pore. He even has his very own brood of adopted children, the only green way to make a family these days. My goodness, if only his wife resembled Angelina Jolie, he could almost be our very own Brad Pitt. It might seem facile to weigh up the pros and cons of the Prime Minister and the young (oh so young, so virile, so thrusting, so dashing and energetic) pretender by *(continued ad nauseam)*

LIZ JONES
Mail on Sunday, 3 Aug

THE prospect of Newcastle United welcoming Joey Barton back into the fold after he had served his prison sentence for aggravated assault prompted much head-shaking moralising from the *News of the World's* chief sportswriter, Andy Dunn.

"Only the extremely naive would think Joey Barton's penchant for cowardly assault might preclude him from making a living as a professional footballer. But in an age when violent crime is a cancer in our society, wouldn't it be significant if the sport made a stance?"

It would be significant if sport made a stance, because the *News of the Screws* certainly isn't going to do so. Writing on the same day as Dunn in the *Screws'* sports pages was football columnist Rob Shepherd, whose 14-month sentence for savagely attacking a man in a bar doesn't appear to preclude him from making a living as a professional hack.

The *Sun* also condemned Newcastle for taking Barton back on the payroll. The club's "tolerant embrace sends a bleak message to Broken Britain where Barton's sort of mindless violence seems depressingly routine… This was a chance for The Beautiful Game to give something back. Show gratuitous violence is unacceptable. He is a serial offender whose rages are fuelled by alcohol."

Of course no one is more serious about cracking down on mindless violence than weirdo editor Rebekah Wade, who in November 2005 spent a night in the cells after attacking her then husband Ross Kemp in an alcohol-fuelled rage.

And if you need to be reminded of the awfulness of modern Britain as you relax in a sun-drenched foreign resort, there's always the Daily Mail, printed around the globe, available from your friendly beach-side newsagent and online.

Richard Littlejohn, Daily Mail 25/07/2008

"VICTORY for fair tips campaign" shrieked the *Independent* on 28 July over news that the government is to outlaw restaurants from paying staff less than the minimum wage and using their tips to make up the difference.

This followed "the *Independent*'s 'fair tips, fair pay' campaign". And what a campaign it was! Its crusade had been running for nearly, oh, two weeks while the trade union Unite had launched its awareness campaign a mere 10 months ago.

It was after a protest by Unite members on 7 July that the department for business, enterprise and regulatory reform said it would "make an announcement on this shortly". The *Independent* joined the bandwagon a whole week later, but the following day had even more shocking news: "At the Groucho Club in London, frequented by some of the capital's most fashionable diners, waiters are left with less than a quarter of the service *charge left by cus*tomers."

And which *Indy* researcher dug out this fact? Step forward "fashionable diner" Roger "Fucking" Alton, the paper's new editor. He had taken a call from a colleague proposing the campaign while he was feeding at the club and immediately collared a passing waiter to ask how much he was paid.

The *Indy*'s whining about fair pay for restaurant staff would have carried more weight if it treated its own canteen staff more fairly. Most are on short-term contracts that are allowed to lapse before being renewed, so depriving staff of rights and benefits that accrue with unbroken service.

Nor does the *Indy*'s promotion of free-range produce extend to its own canteen, where battery-farmed chicken is the only variety on the menu. As for its campaign against evil bottled water and needless packaging (which is, to quote one headline, "killing the planet"), how much more effective it would be if the paper weren't itself involved in bottled water giveaways at railway stations and airports. And let's not mention the *Indy* canteen's apples which are bought in plastic-wrapped packs of four, rather than bulk boxes… tut tut indeed!

WHAT explains the recent rash of alien activity in the *Sun*?

Its UFO detector has been all a-quiver this summer, noting that "Cops chase a UFO over Cardiff" (20 June) and a "UFO is spotted over Bristol" (23 June); while reporting on an "Alien Army" (25 June) and that "UFOs float over Basingstoke" (30 June).

Perhaps the visitors wanted to get their little green tentacles on the two VIP tickets to the London premiere of the movie *X-Files: I Want to Believe*, which the *Sun* was giving away last month. Certainly the coverage will have been appreciated by *Sun* boss Rupert Murdoch. Coincidentally his News Corporation owns 20th Century Fox, backer of… the *X-Files* movie.

WHO says the *Daily Mail* will print any old celebrity rubbish?

Website editorial director Martin Clarke may not have been able to afford the £5.5m that *Hello!* is reputed to have paid for the first official photographs of Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt's newborn twins Knox and Vivienne, but he got the next best thing: exclusive shots, courtesy of paparazzi agency Big Pictures, of "a bin filled with empty beer cans", "a discarded empty bottle of beer" and "the family's cereal boxes" left behind in the clinic in which they were born.

The "cans of beer were likely drunk by proud dad Brad Pitt," reported a thrilled Graham Smith, who also drew readers' attention to "the sofa where Brad could have slept" lest they fail to grasp the full significance of the blurry images.

Perhaps it's lucky that despite regularly singing the praises of his best-performing website, *Mail* editor Paul Dacre doesn't actually sift through its contents very often…

TELEGRAPH WATCH

EMOTIONAL scenes at the leaving party for *Daily Telegraph* veterans Paul Hill and Patsy Dryden, who have been axed after serving on the foreign desk for 37 years and 19 years respectively.

Although many former foreign editors came to the Press House wine bar off Fleet Street to drink their health, there was one who had deliberately not been invited. Step forward Con Coughlin – who turned up nevertheless and found himself buttonholed by Robin Gedye, ex-foreign editor of the *Sunday Telegraph*.

"You've got a fucking nerve turning up here!" Gedye snapped. "You were responsible for sacking half the people in this room. Now fuck off." Coughlin turned even redder than usual, and off he duly fucked.

The ditching of Hill and Dryden has also provoked a magnificent suicide-note to the editor from Ben Rooney, who was founder-editor of the *Telegraph* website in 1994 and has worked regularly for the foreign desk. "Dear Will Lewis," Rooney writes. "After 17 years of being hugely proud to work for the *Daily Telegraph* I am forced to resign any association I have with what was once, but is no longer, a great newspaper. Your despicable treatment of Paul Hill and Patsy Dryden marks an unfathomable low. You sack these two unwaveringly loyal people who have given a total of 56 years of their lives to this paper – when you barely have 56 weeks here – and through this short-sighted penny-pinching action you leave the foreign desk utterly weakened.

"Enough is enough. You have presided over the catastrophic devastation of the paper, reducing it to an embarrassingly empty husk. There it is, a once fine lady, now doubly-incontinent, seeing out her days in a dirty nursing home. You have overseen a Year-Zero purge of everyone who made the *Daily Telegraph* a great newspaper, and not the vacuous receptacle for second-hand *Daily Mail* executives with their second-rate ideas, second-class news judgment and shameful reliance on barely re-worked agency copy disguised as '*Daily Telegraph* Reporter' or 'By Our Foreign Staff'…

"I know I can look back with on what I did for the paper with huge pride: my time on foreign, launching Britain's first web newspaper, the section I launched, the *Telegraph* book I wrote. Will you be able to say the same? Or will you, like some Mini-Me Mugabe, look back at the devastation you wreaked and claim that you were its saviour?"

Lewis, unusually, read this all the way through instead of binning it after the first sentence. He then issued an edict banning Rooney from the *Telegraph* building for life. Happy days!

"IN normal democratic and accountable institutions, the democratic will, voiced several times over, must eventually be heeded," declared the *Telegraph* after 53.4 percent of the Irish voted to reject the Lisbon Treaty.

Two weeks ago the *Telegraph* had the chance to put its own advice into action when it redesigned its shiny website and invited readers to "tell us what you think of Telegraph.co.uk's new look".

Two days on, 447 readers had responded. Of those, 12 liked the redesign. A 97.5 percent majority rejected it, objecting among other things to the "tabloid" nature of the site, the addition of a "celebrities" section, the idea that "a younger generation can't cope with reading articles without pictures, audio or video supplement" and the fact that editors considered the arrest of Hollywood actor Christian Bale to be a bigger story than the arrest of genocidal acupuncturist Radovan Karadzic. "Abysmal, dire, lamentable, baleful, poor... basically bad!" wrote one "YoungReader".

The editors promptly closed comments on the topic. The new design remains unchanged.

HAPLESS *Telegraph* City supremo Damian Reece can't hold on to staff who are now obliged to work weekends since the merging of the daily and Sunday sections into a seven-day operation.

Media correspondent Juliette Garside is the latest to join the stampede for the exit, following the recent departures of business hacks Dominic White, David Litterick, Helen Power, Ben Bland, Sophie Brodie, Jo Moulds, Tom Stevenson, Sylvia Pfeifer, Simon Goodley et al.

Reece hasn't endeared himself further by sending emails warning hacks that their annual pay will be linked in future to how many hits their stories get on the *Telegraph* website. In other words, penury looms unless they can work in gratuitous references to Britney in every story – just the sort of stirring message to rally the troops!

BRITAIN'S most ridiculous libel lawyers have marked the start of the silly season in fitting style by sending out a "summer issue" of their equally ridiculous newsletter, *Get Carter-Fuck*.

The top news item is that Carter-Fuck solicitors are aiding and abetting Tesco's folly in pursuing claims for libel and "malicious falsehood" against the *Grauniad* and editor Alan Rusbridger. Why they should be so proud of this is something of a mystery, especially as things are going none too well for the paranoid plaintiffs (see page 3).

Then comes another Carter-Fuck triumph: "The *Times* newspaper has published an apology to businessman and philanthropist Nadhmi Auchi. Mr Auchi has also brought successful libel complaints against the *Guardian* and *Observer*…"

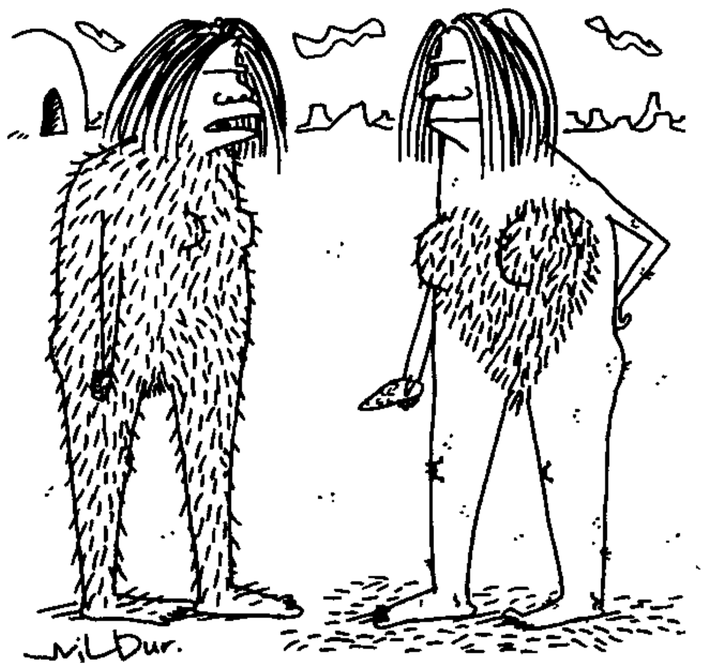
Can this businessman and philanthropist by any chance be related to the convicted criminal Nadhmi Auchi, who in 2003 was given a £1.5m fine and a 15-month suspended sentence by a Paris court for receiving illegal commissions from Elf, the state-owned oil company? And who has been banned from entering the US since 2005 because of his dodgy record?

The very same. It's true that some British newspapers have feebly capitulated to Carter-Fuck's demands that they stop calling him a crook (see *Eyes* 1212, 1213). But he *is* a convicted crook, though *Get Carter-Fuck* wisely omits to mention this fact.

IN VIDEO VERITAS?

COULD Barack Obama be a closet Tory? Thanks to the media-savvy spin doctors at Conservative party HQ, a video of the momentous occasion when the Democrat presidential candidate met David Cameron is now available on YouTube (don't all rush), and in the footage Obama can be heard congratulating Dave "on all your successes".

Was this nothing more than a piece of pre-emptive tactical brown-nosing? And what exactly could he have said to the conspicuously success-starved Gordon Brown?



"I think you could be on to something"

GETTING THE MESSAGE

"The message of the British public is clear and unequivocal. People are concerned about rising food prices, rising petrol prices. People are concerned, rightly, about gas and electricity bills. And I think the message that I have to get to people is this, that we are unequivocal and clear in our direction, that we're going to address and are addressing these problems. We will continue to do so. And my task is to steer the British economy through what have been very difficult times."

– Gordon Brown following Labour's unprecedented defeat in Crewe and Nantwich, 23 May

"Of course we will listen to what people say. I think people know that we are going through difficult times in the economy. It's my job to steer us through these difficult times. And people facing higher petrol bills, higher gas and electricity bills, people facing high food prices, it's my job to make sure I can do more to help people's standard of living improve."

– Gordon Brown following Labour's unprecedented defeat in Henley, 27 June

"I'm sorry that we lost and we have got to listen and understand and hear people's concerns and that's exactly what we're doing. I know what difficult times people face with rising fuel bills. My task is to get on with the job of taking us through these difficult economic times."

– Gordon Brown following Labour's unprecedented defeat in Glasgow East, 25 July

GORDON BROWN's Chequers guest list, shorn of the Blair-era celebs, supposedly says much about the new prime minister's serious style. What it really shows, however, is how enamoured he has become of the bankers who carry much of the blame for his (and the nation's) current woes.

Those who have popped in on the PM in the Buckinghamshire countryside include: Sir Victor Blank of Lloyds TSB; blue-blooded banker Evelyn de Rothschild; Stephen Green of HSBC; Alan Greenspan, the former head of the US federal reserve who did so much to over-inflate the housing bubble on the other side of the Atlantic; Bob Wigley of sub-prime specialist Merrill Lynch (Wigley was also a lead campaigner against the non-dom tax changes that were duly watered down); and HSBC banker-turned-private equity boss John Studzinski.

The private equity "masters of the universe" have also been well represented. Brown entertained Permira's Damon Buffini; Gavyn Davies, the former BBC chairman now running a couple of private equity funds; and Apax chief executive Martin Halusa. They would all have been greatly relieved at the way last year's mini-furore over private equity petered out with only a trivial increase on how much the firms' bosses are taxed on their massive incomes (still less than half the 40 percent of other high earners).

One name oddly absent from the visitors' book, however, was Rupert Murdoch, who was widely reported to have called in at Chequers with Alan Greenspan last August. A cabinet office spokesman told the *Eye* that only the names of "officially supported" guests, ie those fed at public expense, had been disclosed. Informal visitors had not been diclosed.

So would a list of unofficial guests be published? "No". So much for Brown's promise a year ago in his heady first days as PM to "change the culture and workings of government to make it more open".

CALLED TO ORDURE

HOURS before MPs disappeared on recess the governor of the Bank of England appeared in Westminster. At the Commons Treasury select committee, he hinted that he knew who leaked the news last autumn that Northern Rock was in trouble.

Mervyn King, previously the dullest of Dereks, was recently given his second term as Bank governor despite tensions with Alistair Darling (he thinks Darling is a tosser and the feeling is richly reciprocated). Now that King has his second five-year stint, he is proving more adventurous.

He was asked by Newcastle's Jim Cousins (Lab) why he had not held an inquiry into the leak which wrecked any chance of Northern Rock averting crisis. King languidly told the committee that if it was so interested in leaks, it should hold its own inquiry. Then, with a grandiose murmur, he added: "I don't think any leak inquiry has ever produced a very productive result. It is pretty clear where leaks tend to come from."

Cousins, whose constituents have been hit hard by Rock's problems, took a moment or two to react. In the meantime King realised he had dropped a brick and started to bluster. He suddenly claimed he had "absolutely no idea where the leak came from".

The committee's chairman, John McFall (Lab), butted in: "I thought you said it was pretty clear where the leak came from. Did I hear you wrong?"

King: "No, I did not say that."

McFall: "What did you say was pretty clear then?"

King (*turning red*): "I said leaks in general are those things which you are more expert in than those of us in public bodies. I think you are much more expert in where these things originate from and how they come about." Translation: you MPs are always blabbing to the media. You lot leak like incontinent nuns.

Cousins didn't like the governor's tone. He crossly told him the issue was "too important for that kind of by-play". The credibility of the whole new system of banking regulation (which is being redesigned in the hope of stopping another Northern Rock) depended on "the absence of leaks", he said.

King was now picking his words with more care. He asserted that the Bank had not been responsible for the leak. Cousins snorted that "there are inquiries into bottom feeders' leaks – young men at computer terminals – but there are no inquiries into top people's leaks". Translation: how do we know you or one of your posh friends didn't plant this story in the Press? Cousins, distinctly pissed-off, glowered at King.

McFall wanted to know how King could be so sure the leak didn't come from Threadneedle Street. King said only a handful of people in the Bank had known about Northern Rock's crisis. "I know those individuals," he declared, squinting through his pebble glasses. "I know they did not leak it." He didn't quite add "because they are all thoroughly good chaps" but might as well have done.

Wrinkling his nose, the governor added: "You know the people [ie political hacks] who receive these leaks and then broadcast them. They are not people who are in communication with members of the Bank of England." Again it was hard not to conclude that he was accusing politicians (possibly Alistair Darling?) of being the leakers.

King was not the only person to go a few rounds with the committee. Junior Treasury minister Kitty Ussher also appeared and duly had a dreadful time, fluffing her lines, goofing on detail, giggling, blushing, gasping, stuttering and generally behaving like a YTS recruit rather than a clued-up minister.

At the start of the meeting Ussher had given the committee a 100-page document laying out the government's ideas on helping weak banks. Philip Dunne (Con, Ludlow) complained that he and his fellow MPs had not had enough time to read the thing. It didn't even have an index (typical of the Treasury, said Dunne).

Ussher didn't seem much better informed, even though it was her own document. While Dunne was asking her detailed questions, she had to be given running repairs by her Treasury officials who whispered advice from the sides. Michael Fallon (Con, Sevenoaks) also had the witless Ussher in all sorts of trouble as he asked her why the Bank of England's new financial stability committee – which is meant to scrutinise the governor and his pals – will be chaired by, er, the governor of the Bank. The more Fallon probed the government's decision to give the Financial Services Authority a major role in deciding which weak banks have to go into rehab, the more Ussher disintegrated. She stammered that she was "open" to changes in that 100-page document.

In other words, a revived, unexpectedly aggressive Mervyn King has outmanoeuvred Alistair Darling. The Treasury's mandarins know that their ministers have made a balls-up and realise they will have to reconsider giving the non-entities of the Financial Services Authority a bigger say in preventing future Northern Rocks.

'Gavel Basher'

WHILE he schemed to become prime minister, Gordon Brown turned his hand to writing and published *Britain's Everyday Heroes* and *Courage: Eight Portraits*. Knowing their master's tastes, his aides must have thought it a good idea to invite Gill Hicks, a victim of the 7 July London bombings, to a Downing Street reception when he finally took over.

The prime minister was full of praise when they met. "When I talk about courage and British values you are exactly the kind of person I have in mind," he boomed. "You represent the best of Britain."

"But Prime Minister, I'm an Aussie," Hicks replied.

Instead of saying that the Aussies and the Brits are all the same really, or laughing off his mistake or showing the smallest ability to handle a kindly correction with grace and style, the Brown hand froze on Hicks's shoulder. Appalled and confused, he flushed bright red and stumbled off without another word.

"She had lost both her legs and he was the prime minister," a guest at the reception told the *Eye*. "But I ended up feeling sorrier for him than I did for her."

THE Labour party ought to have had an intimation of the coming disaster of Gordon Brown's premiership from a tantrum he threw in the Commons just before he forced Blair out of office.

Frank Field, the former social security minister, had realised that Brown's plans to abolish the 10p tax rate would hammer Labour's working-class supporters.

Field put down parliamentary questions asking how many voters would lose out, but Brown refused to answer them. He asked for a debate on how best to compensate the losers, but Brown refused.

Finally Brown called Field to his office. "No one will lose out," he cried, and Field and everyone else in the room realised that they were dealing with a prime-minister-in-waiting who lived in a world of make-believe.

"Why don't you go on the record and say that?" Field asked.

Instead of answering, Brown pushed his face into Field's and, features contorted with anger, screamed: "You've always hated me, haven't you? You're always trying to do me down."

MP STEPHEN Hammond angrily denied using parliamentary expenses to pay PR firm Parliamentary Liaison Services (PLS) to enhance his image.

When the *Times* reported last month that the Wimbledon Tory, 46, was one of 12 MPs using their staffing allowances to pay PLS, Hammond insisted he only used the firm to conduct surveys rather than for "self-promotion", which would be against the rules.

He must be telling the truth – for surely no professional PR adviser would ever have allowed Hammond to pose for this publicity shot at the Lords vs. Commons charity swim, alongside Labour's rather less flabby Chris Bryant, also 46. Still, he certainly seems to be enjoying the company of the Stringfellow Angels and Page Three girls who were cheerleading...

Stephen Hammond MP, second from the left

POOR Caroline Flint. The housing minister has been left to carry the can for Gordo's ridiculous eco-town scheme, which is collapsing around their ears.

Five of the shortlisted 15 towns have withdrawn from the scheme or are about to. The shires are up in arms and the Tories no longer support it. It's a dead or dying duck.

Flint has been reduced to going round the country "consulting" the communities that are about to have eco-towns dropped on them. At Long Marston in Warwickshire she was booed, so when she went to Weston Otmoor (or "Wotmoor" – see p27 for just how "eco" this town will be) last Thursday she took no chances. The locals in nearby Weston-on-the-Green are well organised, led by Tim Henman's dad Tony, so Flint simply drove through the village in her ministerial car without getting out to see the lie of the land.

No visit to the New Town site either. Her "consultation" instead took place in some quiet (and secure) council offices in Bicester a full seven miles away. Perhaps she was hoping not to hear the shouts of protesters? Some hope.

WHEN health secretary Alan Johnson made his keynote speech last month calling for a "national movement" to tackle obesity, he already had one recruit in the audience.

For the Fabian Society meeting at which he gave the speech was "kindly supported" (ie paid for) by the drug firm Sanofi Aventis, manufacturer of the anti-obesity drug, Acomplia.

Investment bankers at Merrill Lynch believe Acomplia might eventually account for 10 percent of the firm's income. Given that it is approved for use by the NHS, if Sanofi Aventis can do anything to encourage that usage it will only speed up those revenues.

Acomplia works by blocking "Cannibinoid-1" receptors in the brain, thereby reducing the urge to eat. (Just as cannabis smokers get "the munchies", or an urge to snack, scientists realised that blocking the "Cannabinoid" receptors could suppress appetite.) Trials show Acomplia can work, but there are potential problems as some patients can suffer psychiatric side effects.

MAN IN THE EYE

IGOR JUDGE

THERE was no surprise at the news that Sir Igor Judge will take over as lord chief justice in October, but plenty of rejoicing. "His tough-but-fair approach will come as a relief to victims of crime following two soft lord chief justices in the most important post in Britain's legal system," the *Sun* exulted. The *Times* characterised him as "independent-minded and humane".

Shurely shome mishtake? *Eye* readers may recall that as Igor Judge QC he was for many years the chief prosecutor in the Midlands, the man whose silky advocacy secured the wrongful convictions of the Bridgewater Four in 1979 (overturned a mere 18 years later).

His other victories included many that relied on the testimony of the notoriously corrupt West Midlands serious crimes squad, at whose annual dinner he was the guest of honour. In 1983, for instance, he successfully prosecuted Derek Treadaway for armed robbery. It was only after 13 years in jail that Treadaway's conviction was overturned, following the revelation that detectives from the squad had obtained his "confession" by putting plastic bags over his head until he nearly suffocated.

Igor Judge was the obvious man to represent the crown when the case of the Birmingham Six – another virtuoso performance by the West Midlands serious crime squad – was referred to the appeal court by the home secretary in 1987. He persuaded the judges that all the new witnesses who pointed to the men's innocence were liars, and that his chums in the West Midlands force would never dream of falsifying evidence or faking confessions.

"It would have been virtually impossible to find stronger evidence that pointed to guilt," he declared, "except perhaps a film of the actual planting of the bombs." But, he sneered, even that would probably have been presented by the Six as proof of a "police conspiracy". Another three years passed before the Birmingham Six were exonerated and freed. By then the serious crime squad had been disbanded in disgrace, many of its other victims had had their convictions overturned – and Judge had been given the seat on the bench for which his surname predestined him.

Should a barrister's role in perpetuating so many injustices be held against him? A Midlands solicitor who had instructed Igor Judge QC wrote to the *Eye* 12 years ago to insist that it shouldn't. Our criticism, he said, "appears to be based merely on the coincidence that he was involved in a number of high-profile cases, particularly as prosecutor. As you know, as prosecuting counsel he would have no influence whatsoever over the court's decision".

This eccentric interpretation of an advocate's function provoked a riposte from Tony Stock, who pointed out that Igor had maintained his blinkered approach even after becoming a judge. And Stock should know. Back in 1970 he was convicted of robbing a Tesco store in Leeds, and jailed for 10 years, purely because of his vague resemblance to an identikit picture created by a witness who had caught a glimpse of the robber for two seconds on a dark and rainy night. After Stock had served his sentence, still protesting his innocence, a robber-turned-supergrass called Samuel Benefield confessed to the Tesco job. His account of the heist was detailed, accurate and persuasive. He named the four other men involved. Only one problem: he had never heard of Tony Stock. When the home secretary referred the case back to the court of appeal in 1996, Stock's lawyers thought the quashing of his conviction would be a mere formality.

But they reckoned without Lord Justice Judge, who decided that Benefield had invented the whole story to exculpate Stock. He cited no evidence to support this fantastic theory; nor could he explain why Benefield should tell a pack of lies to help someone he'd never met, and risk a perjury charge by repeating it on oath. "So another obviously unsafe conviction stands," we observed at the time (*Eye* 909). "Lord Justice Judge can add Stock to the long line of innocent people whose wrongful convictions he has sought or confirmed."

Still, as the *Sun* says, at least Judge is "tough-but-fair". He proved as much in the case of Gwen Tucker, an Essex mother-of-three who was jailed for six months for claiming social security without disclosing her new £67-a-week job. She pleaded that her husband had left her and she couldn't pay the mortgage or support her children on benefit. The jail sentence shocked even her local Tory MP, but at the court of appeal Judge pronounced it fully justified. Not everyone in court agreed with him: during unruly scenes, the phrase "sadistic old goat!" could be heard above the hubbub.

Is it any wonder that this fair-minded and humane chap was the only candidate for lord chief justice? As the *Times*'s legal editor commented: "If there was a view that Sir Igor had the job in the bag, that was a reflection of his unrivalled qualifications for the post." All those innocent people who served long jail terms thanks to his efforts will surely agree.

TA VERY MUCH?

THE garden party at Buckingham Palace last month to mark the centenary of the Territorial Army was rather less regal than many of the guests had hoped.

For a start the Princess Royal "popped smoke" at the earliest opportunity (or scarpered in civvy-speak) and Prince Edward reportedly infuriated many of the guests by sporting a military uniform covered in medals as honorary colonel of the Royal Wessex Yeomanry.

Few had forgotten that Edward had enlisted with the Royal Marines who sponsored him through university on condition he serve with them for five years afterwards. In fact he resigned his commission with the "booties" after three years, actually serving for less than four months.

Edward is of course no stranger to embarrassments involving uniforms. Last year he sported a Royal Navy captain's uniform at a ceremony for British soldiers killed in the Falklands War, distressing the families and friends of the dead. Unbowed, he again donned military garb to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II at a service in Westminster Abbey. He was reminded by one ungrateful veteran that it was "a solemn occasion and not a fancy dress party".

All-in-all it was hardly a "retention-positive" event and only added to worries that the forthcoming review of the Reserves by the Ministry of Defence will come as a huge shock, as the undervalued Territorial Army bears the brunt of yet another round of defence cuts.

'Squarebasher'

BROWN'S VISION OF FUTURE

TV

Trinny and Susannah Undress The Nation (ITV1)
Dangerous Jobs For Girls (C4)

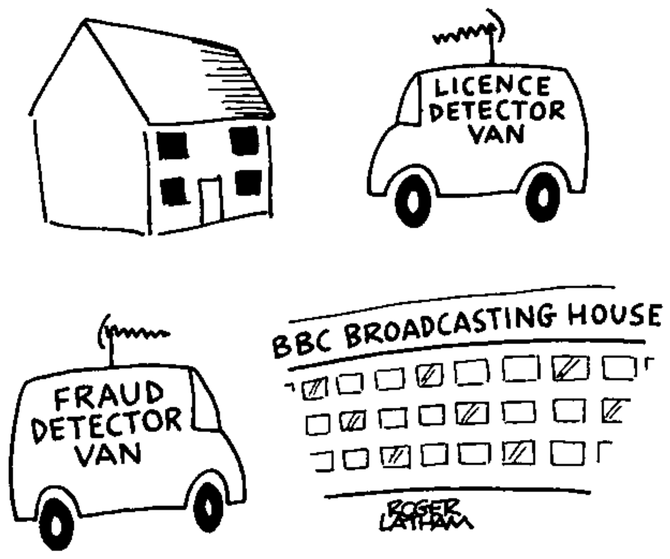
IF Hillary Clinton thinks American politics is biased towards men, she wants to try working in British television.

Neither the BBC, ITV nor Channel 4 has ever been run by a woman, although they have been allowed to control parts of the output that ladies are perceived to like: drama, children's, afternoons. Because most senior presenters also still tend to be men, this means the chaps at the top are always vulnerable to suggestions that the output is too masculine. And so, periodically, they put something on that is made by and for women. Strangely, these series never turn out to be very feminist.

Trinny and Susannah Undress The Nation is a perfect example of girl power commissioned by boys. Though technically feminist, being one of the few shows ever hosted by two women, the series encourages ancient stereotypes about women - dizzy, obsessed with shopping, bad with money – and also uses any possible excuse to show shots of breasts or naked flesh, presumably in the hope of stopping the blokes channel-hopping to the footie. To promote the show, the presenters have even posed for advertising posters in a naked embrace, which you can't imagine Jeremy Paxman and Gavin Esler being asked to do.

Viewers of either gender, though, are likely to experience extreme tedium. The problem for Trinny and Tranny is that, when they left the BBC on a big money transfer to ITV, they were legally required to find formats that didn't quite copy the career-maker that remained copyrighted to the corporation. And so the quite entertaining idea that made their name – two posh girls take fashion-shy viewers shopping – now has to be dressed-up with a lot of pseudo-scientific nonsense.

The show began with the one who didn't used to knob Viscount Linley speaking earnestly to camera about the fact that she and the one who did had "identified two types of women. The shopaholics, who can't get enough of it, and the shopophobics, who really don't like doing it." This attempt to make a platitude sound scientific was so desperate that scientists would have been able to discover two types of viewers in living rooms across Britain: those who had already had enough and those who really don't like it.



But our skirt-experts now introduced examples of each subset. There was a lonely widow who claimed to buy two outfits every day and had a shoe-thing going that made Imelda Marcos look bare-foot. As frequently in TV shows of this kind, it was immediately clear that the woman was using shopping as a distraction from sadness but, instead of helping her, the hosts dourly taught her "shopping rules" to keep her purse closed and her wardrobe clearer. Then, like store detectives, they filmed a shopaholic with secret cameras and taught her clothes store laws to help her try on and buy a dress.

This patronising bilge reached its low point when a psychologist was brought in and made the shopping women wear swimming hats with electrodes and wires on them, like props from Woody Allen's *Sleeper*. Screening MRI scans of the ladies' brains as they browsed among the racks, the shrink, in line with the contracts of all experts invited on peak-time TV, inevitably compared shopping to sexual arousal. As usual, it was less than five minutes before one of the presenters said the word "tits". But most of the audience will have shouted "balls" long before that.

Dangerous Jobs For Girls is another exercise in appearing to cheer feminism while slyly making it seem a bad idea. The producers have had the idea, while watching *The Apprentice*, of finding as many of the posh bossy women contestants as possible and then setting them a challenge.

So, in the "vast and remote flood plain of Brazil", four overbearing Sloanes are invited to take part in a massive annual cattle-drive, usually carried out by an all-male crew of macho cowboys who have seen enough reality TV to know that their main role is to spit lasciviously and express hopes that these gringo girls are going to be well hot and up for it, in order to contrast nicely with the shots on the plane of the contestants in which the lawyers and top company executives explain that they have always had trouble finding boyfriends because they like to be the boss in any situation.

After that, viewers are invited to sit back and endure a dull travelogue which we are induced to keep viewing by the vague possibility that one of the contestants will shag a ranch-hand or be gored by a raging steed. Every so often, one of the ones who used to be in *Spooks* says gravely on the soundtrack sentences like "Julinho decides to confront Nicole" or "after a hard morning, it's buffalo for lunch". Yes, and bull on the box too.

'Remote Controller'

AD NAUSEAM

WHEN Nike announced that it was terminating its contract with Newcastle United footballer Joey Barton, a spokesman said: "While Joey Barton is a talented footballer, we cannot condone or accept what he did."

Barton, who has just been released after serving 74 days of a six-month sentence for yet another incident of violent thuggery, is plainly a highly unpleasant individual. On one level, then, Nike's stance should be commended, even if the loss of a reported £40,000-a-year boot contract will hardly hurt a footballer on £65,000 a week.

But why the public announcement when Nike could simply have stopped paying cheques in private? The announcement smacks of a useful piece of free PR for one of the companies who invented the game. Moreover, if sponsorship is a question of condoning or accepting the signings' off-field behaviour, how come Liverpool's Jermaine Pennant, who was jailed in 2005 for drink-driving while disqualified, is currently on a Nike boot contract? Or indeed the delightful Craig Bellamy, who took a swing at a teammate with a golf club last year?

It would probably help the world's sports stars if Nike were to clarify what degrees of wrongdoing it considers acceptable for those on its payroll. Meanwhile, you can bet your boots that if Barton starts scoring goals and playing for England, he'll be welcomed back into the Nike fold in no time.

OFCOM published its revised "Code on the Scheduling of Television Advertising" at the end of last month, and very dull reading it was too.

However, in among the stodge was the news that viewers can now look forward to even more ad breaks interrupting their programmes.

The so-called "20-minute rule", which requires a 20-minute interval between breaks, is to be scrapped, while films (for which a different rule applied) can now be interrupted every 30 minutes instead of every 45.

Ofcom claims the changes are in order to keep UK rules in line with the European framework of advertising regulation. But the regulators are well aware that with the advent of personal video recorders, only the first and the last slots in an ad break tend to get any attention. More short breaks means more first and last slots. So the new code is a boon for the advertisers, if not the viewers.

DUMB BRITAIN

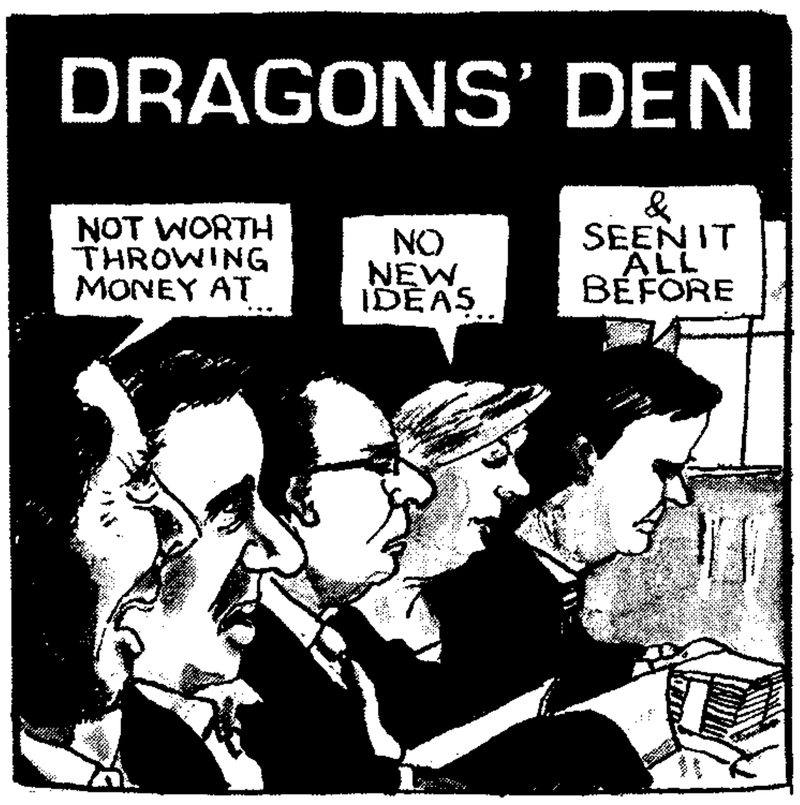
Are You Smarter Than A Ten-Year Old?, Sky One/Two

Presenter: What official title was given to Thomas Becket in 1162?
Contestant (adult): I was going to say "sir". I know he was important. I think it's "Sir Thomas Becket".

Presenter: What is the name of the lighthouse that was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World?
Contestant (adult): Oh no! The only one I can think of is the needle thing – Cleopatra's Needle, which was one of the Seven Wonders of the World.

Presenter: Queen Victoria's husband, Albert, was a relative of hers before they were married. How were they related?
Contestant (adult): I don't think he was her father. I think they were both the same age. I wonder if they were brother and sister?

Presenter: Stelios is going on holiday to Allemagne. Where is he going?
Contestant (adult): Spain pops into my head. I think I saw it on a signpost somewhere.



"Is it a nasty violent film with lots of sadism and killing? Otherwise we won't bother"

HIGH PRINCIPALS

NEWS of the continuing careers of former Walsall College principal Chris Ball and his consultant chum Simon Graham (see *Eye* 1200).

Ball left Walsall last year "to pursue other interests" after several months of leave of absence. Both he and director of finance Les Burns disappeared completely from college life last July, with governors refusing to tell other staff what was going on. However, the move followed a National Audit Office investigation of the college's use of a very expensive consultant, Mr Graham of CSM Consulting, to "restructure" (ie. make job cuts). The *Eye* discovered that Burns and Graham had shared business interests in an education firm called Different Dimension.

Now Mr Ball has resurfaced... as a consultant himself and is currently advising Wiltshire College principal Di Dale on, er, restructuring. Almost 1,000 workers at the college were sent letters earlier this year warning them that they were at risk of redundancy and must reapply for their own jobs. Meanwhile Dale's salary rose to £125,000 and senior management posts proliferated from simply a principal and vice-principal to principal, four vice-principals, three strategic directors, five curriculum directors and five functional directors.

A second flurry of letters last month warned staff not to talk to the press about the changes. Maybe that's because things are now in such a state that there are more than 100 staff vacancies being advertised as staff leave in droves.

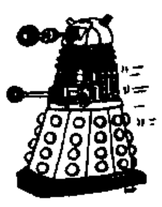
And who else is involved in this restructuring? Why it's Simon Graham, who is based at the college several days a week, in his new job as senior HR consultant for FE recruitment firm Protocol National, which is acting as independent advisor to Wiltshire on picking senior post holders. What a happy reunion!

NOTHING gets past those clever types at the North Tyneside Council Adult Learning Alliance. Their 2008-09 prospectus has been pulped before it reached the public, due to a number of "errors".

One section headed "Do you have skills for life?" invited readers to take part in a simple spelling test. However, the exercise was more challenging than originally intended, as the entire prospectus was littered with typos, most notably the prominent Ofsted quote praising the alliance for its "exeptional" report.

The errors were noticed before the prospectus was distributed, saving the alliance's embarrassment but not its money. The cost of this "exeptional" mistake? £22,800, which, according to a council spokeswoman, will be recovered "through cost efficiencies".

BIRTSPEAK 2.0



"George Entwistle, Controller, Knowledge Commissioning, and Simon Nelson, Controller, Portfolio & Multiplatform, have appointed Ayesha Mohideen in the new role of Head of Knowledge Multiplatform Commissioning.

"Ayesha Mohideen will lead the multiplatform delivery of the Knowledge strategy for BBC Vision – overseeing a new focus in commissioning activity for all digital platforms, managing the existing multiplatform team and joining the senior management team in BBC Vision's Knowledge commissioning operation. George Entwistle said: 'We see multiplatform delivery as massively important to the business of bringing compelling and fulfilling Knowledge-building experiences to our audiences in the future.'"

– BBC press release

"WOCC means a fair deal," gushes a story in *Ariel*, the BBC's in-house weekly, about the "window of creative competition" that allows independent production companies to pitch for slots in the BBC's network output. "Pretty much everyone has grown to like the Wocc."

Er, everyone outside the BBC, perhaps. For after its first year, the "Wocc" has allowed producers outside the BBC to win 74 percent of the commissioned hours available. Meanwhile BBC Vision, the in-house production group, made 572 staff redundant last year and production capacity has already fallen by 15 percent.

Vision director Jana Bennett must feel particularly torn. Her husband, Richard Clemmow, is a co-owner of the indie Juniper Communications, which is enjoying £1m of BBC business this year. He said the figures proved the BBC's commissioning team was "driven by the quality of ideas", further undermining production teams in his wife's department who had lost out to the independent sector.

The Wocc review was overseen by BBC trustee Rotha Johnston, "an entrepreneur in commerce and property" with no broadcasting experience.

CONGRATULATIONS to everyone involved in drama *Harley Street*, which has been recommissioned by ITV for a second series despite unspectacular viewing figures and reviews that ranged from "hopeless and lousy" (*Sunday Mirror*) and "simply ghastly" (*Sunday Times*) to "in dire need of euthanasia" (*Guardian*).

Another victory for production company Carnival, which, since Gareth Neame joined as shareholder and managing director in 2005, has enjoyed such stellar successes as ITV's *The Whistleblowers*, ITV's *Christmas at the Riviera*, ITV's *The Old Curiosity Shop*, ITV's *Midnight Man*, and *Whitechapel*, which is to be screened later this year by ITV.

Celebrating alongside Neame will be his wife, Sally Haynes – controller of drama commissioning for... ITV!

RADIO GAGA

ON-TRAIN security staff from Southeastern and South West Trains are to get access to the digital emergency services radio network, operator Airwave announced last week. The two train companies have signed a deal with Airwave, now owned by Australian private equity company Macquarie, which they say will help rail staff contact British Transport Police.

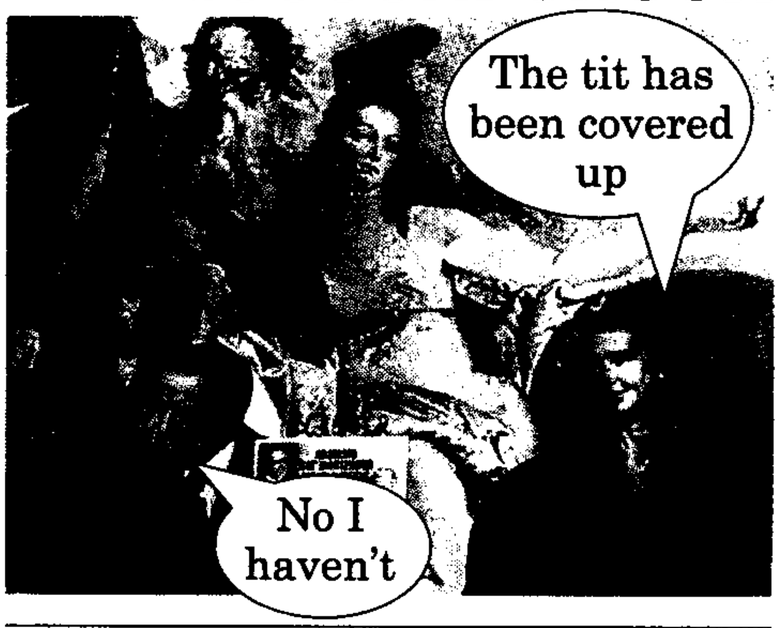
But how are Airwave's current 999-service customers getting along with the system?

Back in 2002, the pisspoor procurement came under fire from the public accounts committee and the National Audit Office, which said there was no evidence that the new system represented any better value than could have been provided by the public sector (*Eye* 1054). They were also unhappy that the police (who funded the development of the system with public money) would get no share of the revenue if any other users signed up to the network – as the rail companies now have.

Details released by the National Policing Improvement Agency under the Freedom of Information Act reveal that during the 2007-08 financial year, Airwave had to pay £8.1m compensation to Inspector Knacker after the roll-out of the system was delayed and hit by a lack of coverage.

The sum is small change compared to the £2.9bn value of the contract, but it does reflect the serious problems being faced by 23 forces. West Yorkshire received the largest payout of £876,110.

BERLUSCONI SHOCK



SUPERMODELS

KERBER

SIGNAL FAILURES

Playing the fuel

BRITAIN's biggest public transport firms are raising bus fares as oil prices rise... because they can get away with it.

Hacks are so obsessed with motorists paying more that bus-fare rises get a mere shrug of the shoulders in local newspapers. But fuel accounted for just 9 percent of UK bus costs in 2007; for every 10 percent rise in fuel prices, the costs rise less than 1 percent. At the biggest firms, managerial sob stories about "absorbing" higher fuel prices and "reluctantly" raising fares contrast with the hard facts given to shareholders.

Stagecoach blamed "escalating fuel costs" for rises of up to 20 percent in Northamptonshire bus fares last month. A spokesman said: "Diesel is obviously one of our main expenditures as a business, and the price increases that everyone is seeing affect us in the same way." Hang on a minute! Stagecoach's annual report reveals that it's done a deal with oil companies to get 94 percent of its fuel at fixed prices until May 2009.

Arriva raised most single fares in the York area by 10p or 20p on 21 July, its second increase in eight months. Nigel Featham, of Arriva Yorkshire, said: "Like all road users, Arriva is feeling the impact of increasing fuel costs."

Oh yeah? Arriva's annual report reveals 81 percent of its fuel is fixed at 27p a litre (excluding delivery and tax) for 2008 – that's 1p a litre *less* than Arriva's fixed fuel price in 2007. Another 10 percent of Arriva's fuel is "protected by indexation arrangements".

So far Arriva hasn't mentioned fuel prices to justify eyewatering fare rises at its CrossCountry rail franchise (*Eye* 1211) but passengers can expect another whopper in January. They might like to know Arriva has fixed the price for 75 percent of CrossCountry's anticipated fuel until 2016.

FirstGroup raised Essex bus fares by 10p last month, local bus boss Bob Dorr saying all transport operators faced higher fuel costs. Raising fares by up to 12 percent in Staffordshire and Cheshire, local FirstGroup manager Paul de Santis said: "The increase is because of one reason – cost pressures. It is predominantly down to fuel." Raising fares by up to 15 percent around Edinburgh on 29 June, local FirstGroup boss Paul Thomas said: "In light of the escalating increases in fuel and other operating costs, we have reluctantly decided to revise the price of some of our fares."

A consistent message – but not consistent with FirstGroup's latest annual report which says 2007-8 was "a year of fuel price stability". For 2008-9 its entire UK fuel is fixed at $76 a barrel.

Where does the extra cash from higher fares go, if most isn't going on fuel? The annual reports can enlighten us: **Stagecoach**'s UK bus profits rose 30 percent to £110m, **FirstGroup**'s UK bus profits rose 18 percent to £122m and **Arriva**'s UK bus profits rose 16 percent to £88m.

TRANSPORT for London lost out when two Oystercard glitches gave people free travel last month, but it can console itself with extra cash from overcharging passengers at King's Cross.

Oyster readers have been installed at the part of the station mainly used by First Capital Connect commuters. But some FCC trains arrive at other platforms, where passengers have no facility to "touch out" (terminating their journey) and are therefore fined £1.50 each time.

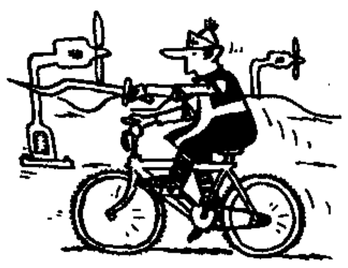
One *Eye* reader who pays £2 for his regular journey by FCC and tube found himself paying almost double. FCC told him it hoped validators for the remaining platforms would be installed by autumn. It asked TfL what passengers should do meanwhile. TfL suggested walking to the other part of the station and telling staff they wish to touch out, or getting fined each time and phoning the Oyster helpline for a refund.

PS: The Oyster helpline is an 0845 number. Regulator Ofcom says that "these numbers are generally more expensive to call than ordinary geographic numbers", recipients of 0845 calls can pocket some of the call revenue, and "we encourage public bodies to use the cheaper 03 number range".

'Dr B. Ching'

ECO-GNOMICS

Every award helps...



IN THE increasingly crowded "corporate responsibility" calendar, a highlight of summer is the annual Business in the Community (BiTC) "Awards for Excellence" dinner at the Royal Albert Hall.

This is where the best ethical and sustainable commerce is rewarded, often in person by the Prince of Wales, the president of BiTC. Though companies collect gongs for outstanding progress towards greener practices, this year's awards left many environmentalists with a very sour taste in their mouths.

For a start, they probably did not expect to see so many energy giants on the shortlists celebrating apparent "excellence". But EDF Energy and NPower were both deemed brilliant enough to feature, as was E.ON UK, which is actually proposing a return to coal-fired power with a new plant at Kingsnorth, Kent, to the disbelief of even the most moderate environmental charities.

Business in the Community describes itself as a "unique movement of over 800 of the UK's top companies committed to improving their positive impact on society". It's a noble cause; but many criticise it for being little more than a PR firm with charitable status which takes money from "clients" in the form of what are effectively consultancy fees and then rewards them in front of the great and good of the green business world. This allows BiTC members to boast how sustainable they are, because the Prince of Wales, Al Gore (last year's star turn) and broadcaster Jim Naughtie (for it is he who hosts the evening) all say so.

Presumably a major supermarket chain that has been under fire for years for its environmental record, its treatment of suppliers, its tendency to send "local" chickens on 1,000 mile round-trips to be packaged and its alleged exploitation of textile workers in India would not be welcome at such a celebration of excellence – especially if the chain has a less than free-range approach to poultry farming and also poses a threat to small independent grocers and butchers on high streets wherever it has appeared. Surely a business such as this would struggle to be described as "excellent" at a celebration of the most sustainable and ethical business practices?

Er, not a bit of it. Step forward proud winner of the 2008 Business in the Community "Environmental Leadership" Award... Tesco!

It seems no one was more surprised than the retail giant itself. While most companies were represented at the dinner by their chairman, chief executive or other suitably senior management, Tesco failed to field any senior executive to collect the prize.

Some seasoned sustainability experts were so disgusted by the accolade they promptly stood up and left. Luckily HRH had given this year's bash a miss so was saved some of the embarrassment.

MEDICINE BALLS

Market daze

THE key to the success of Lord Darzi's next stage review is to "put clinicians back in the driving seat" of the NHS. But do they understand where they're going?

The service is now riddled with jargon invented by management consultants to justify their fees, and very few doctors have a clue what it means. Additionality. Contestibility. Service Line Reporting. Patient Level Activity Based Costing Solutions. Directed Enhanced Services. Extended Choice Network. Healthcare Resource Group version 4. Market Forces Factor. Secondary Uses Services. Unbundling the tariff.

The situation is so dire that this year's Audit and Healthcare Commission report on "new" Labour's reforms, *Is the Treatment Working*, had to include a five-page glossary. Unsurprisingly, it concluded that there is no evidence the imposition of choice and competition are improving the service. The Healthcare Commission's reward is now to disappear up the arse of the new Quality Care Commission, where it will find it much harder to cause trouble.

According to the *Health Service Journal* (24 July), GPs keen to be involved in Practice Based Commissioning (whatever that is) are not communicating well with primary care trusts when submitting Service Redesign Bids. So to help them write their business plans, everyone's favourite health minister Ben Bradshaw is bringing in more management consultants "to establish a framework contract providing quality assured development support".

Occasionally, doctors understand only too well what managers are getting at. The *HSJ* also reported a "brutal culling" at Avon and Wiltshire mental health trust, which has decided to replace its medical director (ie a doctor trying her hand at management), along with the finance director, while asking four other managers to reapply for their roles. M.D. has now been sent the eight-page advert for the new combined role of medical director and director of strategy and business development.

The trust is looking for a doctor to "drive the business development strategy in line with the Business Proposition, scanning the mental health environment for new opportunities and identifying and stimulating new business solutions that fit with the corporate vision". The ad mentions "profitability" four times. We no longer treat the mentally ill according to need. We have to make money out of them.

M.D. has also been sent a draft contract between Dr Foster Research, the private company making millions out of (our) NHS data and drug giant Pfizer. The contract is for a "customised version of the population health manager tool" for £375,000 plus VAT. The tool uses NHS data to allow analysis of "market sizing, hospital market share, GP referral patterns, benchmarking provider performance and understanding admission rates." This will allow Pfizer to "focus marketing and awareness-raising activity to stimulate growth".

Labour's reforms are doomed to fail because, despite all Darzi's rhetoric of "engagement", you can only unite the NHS around common values and the emphasis on commodity and profitability is repugnant to many frontline staff. Labour can try to disguise its agenda through the bullshit of marketisation, but it still smells terrible.

M.D.

Even the toilets are lovely, with soft light and ornate painted clay bowels for hand basins.

Eating Out column, Sunderland Echo

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

BORIS & KEN

"THE trouble we have – and it is one of the few things in politics which makes me almost wild with anger – is the sale of the playing fields, above all the sale of the playing fields in state schools," wrote Boris Johnson in the *Telegraph* back in 2004. How times change.

Last month the new London mayor signed off on his first planning application to build housing on a state school playing field. Campaigners against the development, which is to fund the rebuilding of Holland Park Community School, had hoped Boris the Menace's much vaunted opposition to flogging off the *nation's* playing fields would stop the plan in its tracks, since he has the final say on such applications.

At £76m the new school building is set to be the most expensive in the UK. In order to offset the cost, Kensington and Chelsea council is to sell off a chunk of the school's playing fields – enough for "72 units" of residential development with "associated parking spaces".

The council is pushing ahead with its plans, despite recently being told by its own panel of architects that the school designs were "monolithic and relentless" and would date very quickly. It did, however, scrap the idea of making the housing affordable and available to teachers.

City Hall's announcement of approval of the plan trumpeted that the development would result in "improved informal outdoor space and an Olympic-size indoor swimming pool". In fact the new pool is planned to be exactly the same size as the school's current pool, 25 metres. If Boris thinks that's Olympic-size, hadn't someone better check the plans for London 2012?

DENNIS THE MENACE

RESIDENTS of Christchurch, Dorset, are celebrating winning a small skirmish in their attempts to hold back the tide of bling threatening to change forever their once sedate town.

Last year *Eye* 1177 reported how, after winning planning permission for flashy harbourside flats in the grounds of the Avonmouth Hotel, developer Dennis Roach (the controversial football agent) kissed and cuddled Tory councillors (ugh) in the council chamber. Roach and his son Nicholas (affectionately known to locals as "Cock" Roach) also won planning permission to refurbish the historic but run-down Kings Arms Hotel, a few hundred yards away, turning part of it back into houses and building yet more flats and houses in the grounds, plus a "Georgian-style" extension and a bistro run by celebrity chef Gary Rhodes.

Locals objected that the restaurant in the hotel's grounds would block a much-used public footpath, but the Roaches claimed there was no right of way and erected fences to keep locals out. Christchurch borough council officials agreed and the planning permission went ahead. The designation of rights of way, however, is a county council matter. And last month Dorset county council granted the route "byway" status, meaning that it can be used by cyclists, riders and walkers, after hearing incontrovertible evidence that locals had been using it since at least the 1940s. The residents may have won this battle, but they may yet lose the war. The byway status may take months to come into force, and some fear the diggers could move in before it does. Will the property slump come to their rescue? Fingers crossed!

POISON BURY

WHEN pensioners in Prestwich had their homes attacked by graffiti-daubing vandals, Bury council took decisive action to put things right.

Instead of sending someone round to clean it up, however, it threatened the oldies with legal action if they didn't clear the graffiti from the walls of their homes themselves.

As "risk management co-ordinator" Jim Hunter told them in a letter: "The external appearance of your property is a source of concern due to this graffiti. I advise that if prompt action is not made in remedying the removal of the graffiti, the council has the option to take enforcement action under section 215 of the town and country planning act 1990. I do ask that the graffiti is removed within 21 days from the date of this letter."

To add insult to the oldies' injury, at the same time Bury's leading councilors were off in the Lake District spending two days at a luxury hotel talking a lot bollocks about, er, crime and wellbeing in the community.

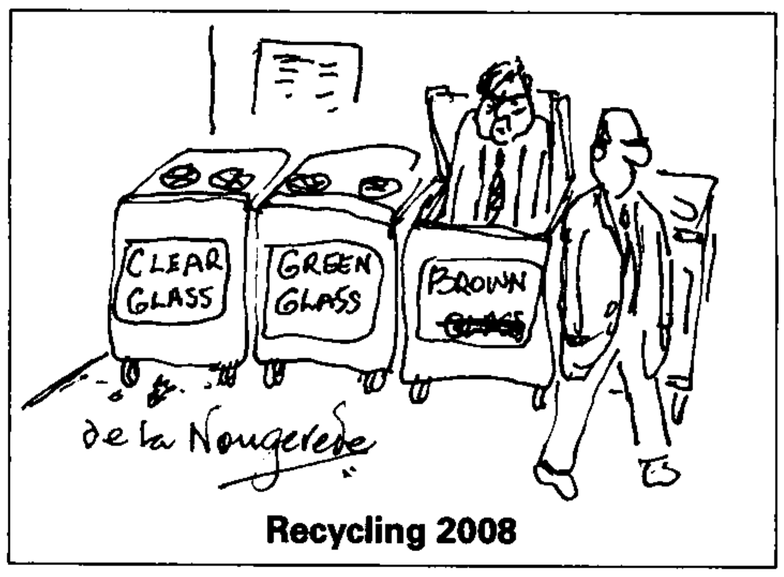
The council, however, defended this "strategic planning conference" at the £126-a-night Lodore Falls Hotel beside Derwentwater. Chief executive Mark Sanders told the *Bury Times*: "Without agreeing how we can work together to tackle the issues like crime, poverty, child welfare, health and well-being of our community, the future would look very bleak for our taxpayers." How many more nights in a luxury hotel will it take to realise that bullying pensioners into cleaning up the work of hooligans isn't the way forward?

THE CURSE OF GNOME

IN RETROSPECT, the proud moment when Bournemouth Tory councillor Alex Adams was runner-up in the Rotten Boroughs Awards "Democrat of the Year" category last January was almost certainly the pinnacle of his political career (*Eye* 1201).

In July 2007 we told how Cllr Adams was elected on a platform of "fighting overdevelopment" while somehow neglecting to tell voters that he was director of a property company called Sandbourne Developments which was applying to demolish Edwardian villas and build flats in their gardens – exactly the sort of thing the residents who voted for him were so upset about (*Eye* 1189).

Alas, after receiving our award Cllr Adams's career did not prosper. He resigned from



Recycling 2008

Bournemouth council in March, after months of criticism that he hardly ever showed up for meetings. And last month he was made bankrupt after Sandbourne Developments went down the tubes.

SNOUT AND PROUD

COUNCIL staff around Britain went on strike last month over a 2.45 percent pay rise. Happily their paymasters have felt less constrained in awarding themselves more generous rises.

At **East Cambridgeshire** district council senior members have just trousered a modest 94 percent increase in their allowances, while at the same time cutting the arts budget by £70,000 and forcing the closure of a gallery in Ely. The 94 percent is for committee chairs, with ordinary members getting a mere 10 percent rise, costing the council £22,000.

In **Stockton-on-Tees** councillors get a 47 percent increase, with the leader's annual allowance topping £28,000; while in **Poole,** Dorset, councillors have voted themselves rises of up to 67 percent. Cabinet members' allowances will rise to £10,707 on top of their basic allowance of £8,980. While ordinary councillors will get their extra dosh in September, cabinet members will have to wait till April in order to avoid busting the council's £571,470 budget for allowances. Tory group leader Ann Stribley described this as "a significant sacrifice". grasping bin men and clerical staff, please take note.

● ***EYE* 1214 reported how Tyneside's disabled children were facing the holidays without any of the week-long summer courses that provide stimulating play and vital respite for their families, after Newcastle city council cut off funds to the charities that provide them. Since our story appeared, however, parents have received letters telling them that the council has, after all, found sufficient funds (under a mattress, perhaps) to enable the courses to go ahead, at least for this year. Hurrah!**

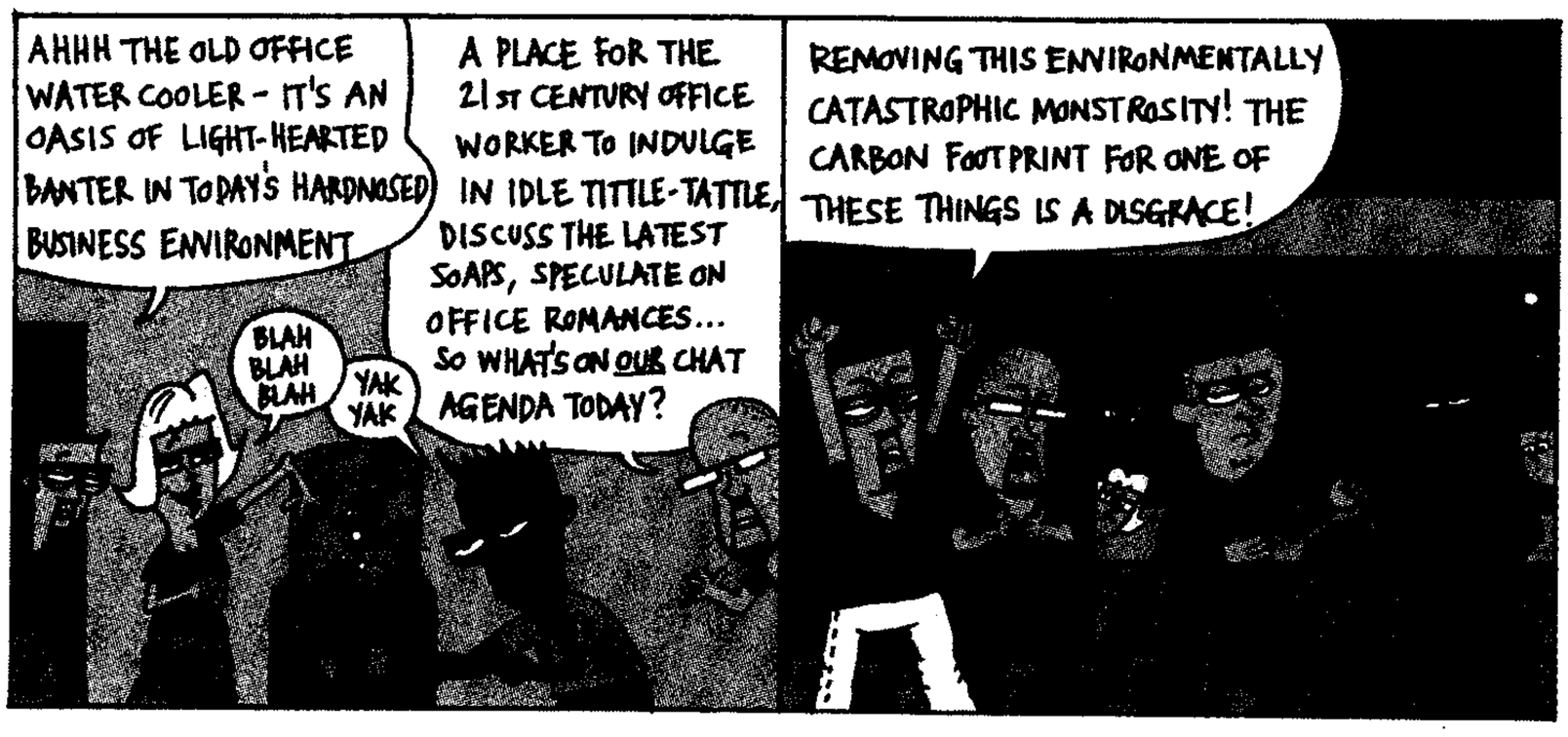
POOLING RESOURCES

THE ONGOING closure of council-run swimming pools up and down the country, highlighted in *Eye* 1211, are bad enough – but how safe are the ones that remain open?

On 15 June, seven-year-old Michelle Gellard drowned at the Blackwater Leisure Centre in Essex during a special "fun day". Within hours of Michelle's death Maldon district council had distanced itself from the tragedy. Its statement read: "The council wishes to make it clear that whilst Maldon District Council owns the Leisure Centre Building, the facility is managed under contract to the council by Leisure Connection Ltd". Leisure Connection has featured numerous times in the *Eye* in recent years, principally in connection with cleanliness at the pools it manages, but there have also been complaints over lifeguard cover.

FoI requests by pressure group Leisure Connection Watch to Maldon council for information on the performance of Leisure Connection *prior* to the accident were refused under Section 31 (Law Enforcement) of the Act, as disclosure was deemed prejudicial and "not in the public interest". In a macabre game of pass-the-parcel, police handed the investigation to the Health and Safety Executive, who passed it to Maldon district council. The council then issued a statement confirming "Leisure Connection Ltd will play a key role in the investigation". So no possible conflict of interest there.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON KNIFE & PACKER


AHHH THE OLD OFFICE WATER COOLER - IT'S AN OASIS OF LIGHT-HEARTED BANTER IN TODAY'S HARDNOSED BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT
BLAH BLAH BLAH
YAK YAK
A PLACE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY OFFICE WORKER TO INDULGE IN IDLE TITTLE-TATTLE, DISCUSS THE LATEST SOAPS, SPECULATE ON OFFICE ROMANCES... SO WHAT'S ON OUR CHAT AGENDA TODAY?
REMOVING THIS ENVIRONMENTALLY CATASTROPHIC MONSTROSITY! THE CARBON FOOTPRINT FOR ONE OF THESE THINGS IS A DISGRACE!

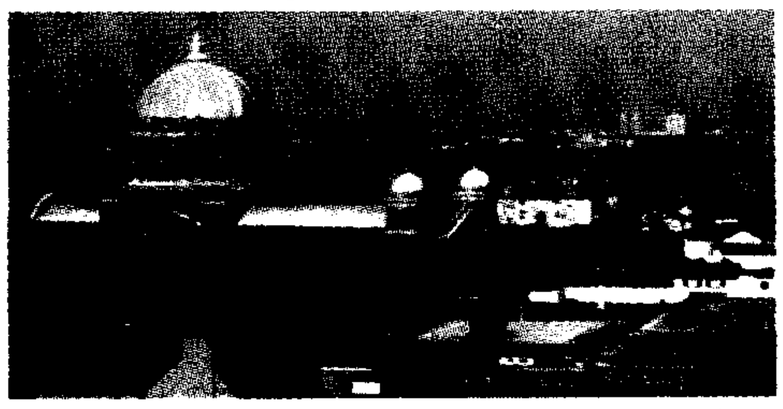
NOOKS and CORNERS

THE Roman Catholic church of SS Peter & Paul in New Brighton is a great local landmark on high ground at the end of the Wirral peninsular.

Built in 1932-35 and designed by E. Bower Norris, it has a fine Classical dome. But the New Brighton church, sometimes known as the Dome of Home by sailors making for the Mersey, is just the sort of ecclesiastical plant modern clergy hate: large and expensive to maintain, traditional in character and looking like a church – so it has long been earmarked for closure.

Now the diocese of Shrewsbury has had its way. Parishioners have recently been told their much-loved church is to close on 17 August. This is despite the arrival of a letter from the Vatican in June stating that the Bishop of Shrewsbury had "no current plans" to close SS Peter & Paul. It has since emerged that negotiations with the Anglican diocese of Chester have been going on for months to enable the evicted Catholic parishioners to share a nearby church.

The parish is fighting back, however. The campaign group SOUL – "Save Our Unique Landmark" – complains: "Parishioners have been



treated with the utmost contempt. This was a done deal from the outset. It is a disgraceful decision."

SOUL also accuses the diocese of Shrewsbury of having decided to "covertly withdraw maintenance" of the building ten years ago, since when the building has been neglected (SOUL itself had to arrange for maintenance of the gutters). Yet the congregation has continued to make Gift Aid payments in the belief that the money claimed back from the Inland Revenue would be spent on the building. SOUL estimates that over the last decade this could amount to some £350,000 – a sum which has disappeared into a diocesan bank account. This abuse of trust has now been referred to the Charity Commission. Incidentally, the church was paid for with the pennies of the faithful; but if the site is sold to a developer for private housing as the diocese clearly hopes (although the building is listed grade II), the profit will also go to the diocese.

In the recent book by Christopher Martin on RC churches in England and Wales called *A Glimpse of Heaven* and published by English Heritage, the foreword by Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, Archbishop of Westminster, notes that "architecture has its own particular and very important part to play in creating a space for meeting, a place for humanity, a space for the sacred". He also writes that: "It is vital for our sense of identity that buildings such as those illustrated in this book be carefully and competently managed". The message has clearly not got through to the Philistine and cynical Brian Noble, Catholic Bishop of Shrewsbury.

IN THEORY such scandalous treatment of a church is not possible in the Church of England, which has mechanisms to deal responsibly with redundant buildings while the Faculty Jurisdiction system is meant to ensure that no alteration is made to "the fabric, ornaments or furniture" of a church without the approval of a diocesan advisory committee. That's the theory – but not the practice in the diocese of Bath 'n' Wells.

The parish church at Bishops Lydeard in Somerset is a magnificent 15th century building, listed grade I. In John Betjeman's *Collins Guide to English Parish Churches*, E.T. Long wrote that: "Within is a noble rood-screen restored to its former glory by the genius of Sir Ninian Comper with the Rood and its attendant figures all gold and colour. Comper altars and glass make glorious the chancel and chapel and there is a fine array of the richly-carved bench-ends so characteristic of the region."

Recently, however, Comper's carefully-designed gilded pendant light fittings have been removed in favour of a new and garish lighting scheme – without Faculty and without consulting the DAC. This has been done by the new incumbent, the Rev Michael Wishart, who has done much to repair the medieval fabric but who has further plans to remove the medieval pews from the north aisle, to move the font and tarmac over graves outside to make a car park. He has also described Comper's work as, er, "shit".

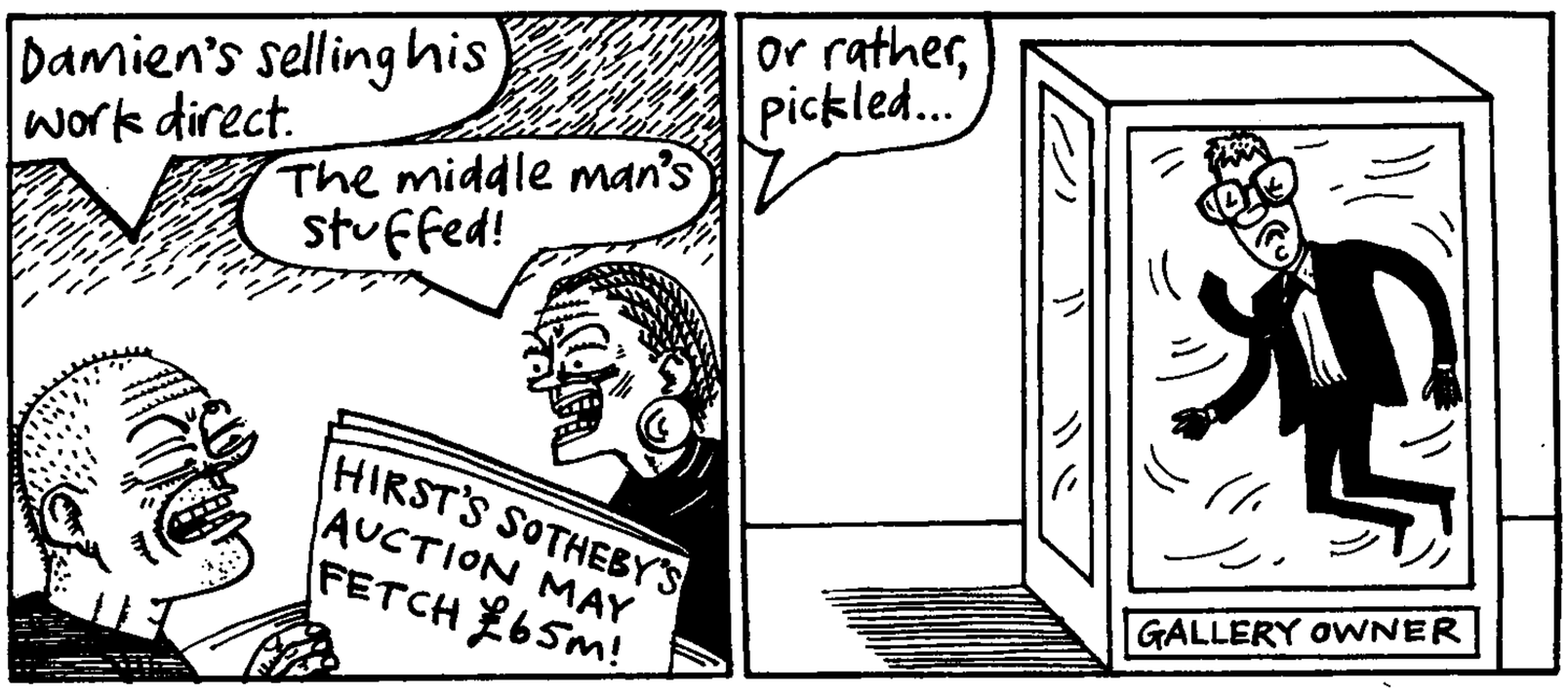
That may be a matter of opinion, but the Bishop Lydeard restoration was one of Comper's best and he was associated with the church for some 30 years after 1919. Comper was once the best-known designer in the Church of England – much admired by Betjeman – but times have changed and these days what he sought to achieve is barely understood and his work now tends to be extravagantly praised, if at all, by the extreme misogynistic camp wing of the Church.

The real point, however, is that Comper's light fittings should not have been removed without Faculty, and the Twentieth Century Society has objected. Nevertheless, the Archdeacon of Taunton, John Reed, is supporting the incumbent while the chancellor of the diocese is minded to issue a retrospective confirmatory faculty. If this is done, it will undermine the whole diocesan advisory committee system. It will also demonstrate that, what with the clergy and diocesan authorities sticking together, the poor old Church of England cares less and less for the public interest as it degenerates into another sect – albeit one with the loveliest and most precious buildings in England in its ownership.

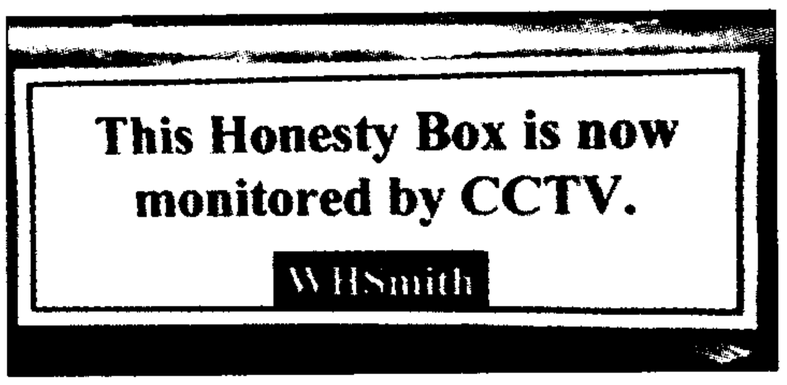
'Piloti'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH


Damien's selling his work direct.
The middle man's stuffed!
HIRST'S SOTHEBY'S AUCTION MAY FETCH £65m!
Or rather, pickled...
GALLERY OWNER

I-SPY *Stansted Airport*



Submitted by Max Nathan. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs)*

BRUSSELS SPROUTS

DESPITE the British government's promises not to ratify the Lisbon Treaty until a judicial review had taken place, it went ahead and signed it anyway, making sure it was safely in the hands of Italian foreign office officials in Rome (where the treaty was first proposed), before bothering to tell the public on 17 July.

However, Czech and German lawyers have still to decide on the validity of the document, which many claim is identical to the constitutional treaty rejected by Dutch and French voters in 2005.

With the prospect of EU citizens being controlled by an unaccountable Brussels elite instead of their own parliamentary systems, one might have expected greater responsibility from MEPs in an increasingly powerful European parliament. Alas, MEPs again followed another proposal by MEP Richard Corbett to give unelected staff around the European parliamentary president, Hans-Gert Poettering, the right to veto all written questions to the European Commission. The proposal was approved by an astonishing 501 votes to 183 on 8 July, even though it limits the MEPs' power to question the actions of dodgy commissioners.

EU-phemisms

We did nothing for 10 years then bribed them with subsidies

Given that the EU lost €1.4bn in fraud and irregularities last year, a massive €33m of which was attributed to the Commission alone according to a report by Agence Europe, this seems a backward step, to say the least.

ON THE subject of EU budget fraud, the latest Commission anti-fraud report shows the number of irregular farm subsidy payments fell dramatically in 2007 – down to 1,548 from a steady level of around 3,200 in the previous few years.

This is good news, of course. Or is it? The apparent drop in irregularities is actually all down to a rule change quietly introduced by the Commission in 2006 which no longer requires member states to report irregularities involving less than €10,000 (the previous threshold was €4,000).

A Commission spokesman told the *Eye* the rule change was part of a "general simplification of the management of funds". The work of EU anti-fraud squad OLAF should certainly be simpler. By happy coincidence, the new rule came in as OLAF was undergoing an organisational reform, following criticism about the ridiculous time it took to deal with cases and its general bungling.

The rules have also been quietly modified in another way: member states no longer have to report how much is recovered. As the average recovery rate from 2000 to 2006 was just 19 percent, perhaps it's best this embarrassing figure be allowed to disappear from public view...

Letters

Article bombed

Sir,

Your article on cluster bombs "Ten bombs or less" (In the Back, Eye 1213) was almost wholly inaccurate. The article states that British diplomats added "legalistic clauses" so as to allow the USA's CBU-97 munition to escape the ban. This was not the case and the CBU-97 is prohibited under the treaty. The article also implied that UK submunitions with self-destruct mechanisms had also escaped the ban, this is also not the case. On this basis almost all of the substance of the article was incorrect or poorly founded speculation.

Not wishing to be pedantic and notwithstanding the substantive issues I think the title "Ten bombs or fewer" would have been more grammatically correct.

All best wishes,
RICHARD MOYES,

Policy & Research Director, Landmine Action.

● Apologies: The British Government did at first try and amend the treaty so that only bombs with "more than 10 conventional submunitions" would be included, which could have left the US CBU-97 bomb outside the treaty. However, this amendment was not accepted in the final draft. Ed.

Gnome and Noam

Sir,

Stefan Denis (letters, Eye 1215) takes Ratbiter to task for equating Holocaust deniers with neo-Nazis. Maybe Mr Denis hasn't noticed that there's, well, rather a large overlap between the two groups. And if Noam Chomsky "knows a thing or two about the use of language" he knows even more about arguing, perversely and regardless of the evidence, that the Jews – especially Israel – are always wrong and their enemies right. So it follows that his knee-jerk reaction to Holocaust denial is likely to be one of sympathy and support.

I do not know if Ratbiter's assertion that Iran wants to kill all the Jews is true. But Iran is a fundamentalist Islamic state: therefore the assertion is certainly not an "incredible claim." Hasn't Mr Denis read recent Eye articles about the Channel 4 documentary – at first censured but then vindicated – showing Muslim extremists, in British mosques, exhorting their followers to, er, kill all the Jews? And no escape route here for Mr Denis by way of "mistranslation": the Jew-haters were speaking in, er again, English.

Yours,
DAVID WHIPPMAN,

Via email.

Eco echoes

Sir,

Following Keith L. Harrison's letter (Eye 1214) it suddenly occurred to me where I've heard the name for your green column before. David Bowie's 1967 hit the laughing gnome contains the line 'not at the London School of Eco-gnomics'.

PAUL TAMBLIN,

Via email.

Bashing the bishops

Sir,

The C of E has always been an irresistible target for caricature and humour. My second favourite Eye cover ever was of Archbishop Runcie and two chums in beaming smiles, dresses and silly hats with the caption 'Who needs women priests when you've got us?'. But the cartoon (Eye 1215 p. 21) showing two toffee-nosed vicars walking Pharisee-like past scenes of urban horror while agonising about women bishops was a little too easy.

Archbishop Rowan on the Today programme this morning (24th July) discussed amongst other things the mosquito nets, education, advocacy, conflict resolution etc the global Anglican communion quietly and regularly delivers for Africa.

The C of E does all kinds of work in the grimmer parts of Britain from street pastors to aiding trafficked women, while people fight to get their kids into church schools. A Google on Christian Aid, TEAR fund, Traidcraft etc will confirm that the church hasn't entirely forgotten her Master's voice.

Anyhow, as any fule no, the majority of people training for the Anglican ministry are female and, that bridge having been crossed, some were always going to become bishops.

It's not an issue in my village church, where men and women worked together to fundraise for a new extension where we now run a public library and internet café in partnership with the council.

Weak and flawed as we are, Anglicans agree that Jesus is the best answer we're gonna get to addiction, family breakdown, violence and the appalling results of sexual anarchy as depicted in the cartoon, which I think I will frame and put up in our church as an inspiration and reminder to us all.

Yours truly,
STEPHEN HAYES,

Pew Filler, c/o All Saint's C of E church, Botley, Hants.

PS: Favourite Eye cover was a stern-looking Ayatollah Khomeini being asked by a fellow mullah if he had read Salman Rushdie's 'Satanic Verses', to which he replies, "Do you think I'm mad?"

Democratic test

Sir,

Your Brussels correspondent's criticism of MEP Richard Corbett's proposals to raise the threshold for forming a group in the European Parliament from 20 to 25 MEPs (Eye 1214) concluded by quoting Danish MEP Hanne Dahl who claimed the idea went "against democracy". Hanne Dahl (who sits with UKIP in the Independence and Democracy Group) proposed raising the threshold to 22 or 23 MEPs (depending on enlargement). Does democracy rest on but two MEPs?

Corbett's report (now adopted) also includes new rules which will aid small groups and were originally suggested by veteran Eurosceptic MEP Jens Peter Bonde. No mention of this from your Brussels correspondent though.

Yours,
JULIET LODGE,

University of Leeds.

Scenes You Seldom See

"We love living in Birmingham. Both Nick and I find the accent so musical and expressive"

An ill wind

Sir,

Put simply, these windmills ("Wind and hot air", Letters 1215) do not work effectively. Either it is too windy or not windy enough. In the latter case they need back-up that is enormously expensive to provide. Also, because they are so expensive to install and maintain, they need and are obtaining enormous subsidies provided in no small part by a top-up on our electricity bills. This means that they do not and will not make provision of energy cheaper or more effective. What they will do is to provide enormous revenue for the wind farm companies, mainly from subsidy but also for what little energy they supply, and lesser but very useful revenue for the farmers greedy or desperate enough to participate.

I will declare an interest as Stilton, a small hamlet dating back to the Domesday Book and nestling in the beautiful Blackmore Vale overlooked by Shaftesbury, is threatened with no fewer than six of these monsters measuring 404 feet in height (slightly taller than the spire of Salisbury Cathedral) with the co-operation of local farmers.

Unfortunately the EU has directed that Dorset must provide four percent of this renewable energy they are seeking. They have in this the full backing of Mr Brown and Mr Cameron, both wishing to air their green credentials without understanding the implications any more than do the general, and mainly town-living, public. The answer, as the French so well appreciate and have unlike us planned for, is nuclear energy but, as one of a "highly vociferous minority of fanatics", I would say that, wouldn't I?

Yours faithfully,
M.V. WARD,

Silton, Dorset.

Only despots need apply

Sir,

I recently placed an advert in PE to try and sell my car registration D35POT but didn't receive a single enquiry. As a PE subscriber I was strangely glad of this but as a skint human being I was disappointed.

Could you or your readers please advise me which publications are read by despots so I can rid myself of this shame?

JAMES YOUNG,

Drymen, Glasgow.

Lookalikes

Sir,

No wonder it took so long to find Karadzic...

MANY READERS,

Via email.

Cleared for take-off

Sir,

T. Byrne (aeroplane nerd) writes in his letter in Eye No. 1215 commenting on the millions of lines of code and the hundreds of man years invested in it "How does anyone outside the originating company check something that big?". This begs the question of how does anyone inside the originating company check something that big. The history of software engineering is littered with cock-ups because software is now too complex to be completely verified. As long as too many aircraft don't fall out of the skies people will just accept this as a fact of life.

Yours sincerely,
DR FRANCIS WRAY
(Frequent Flyer and IT Consultant),

London SW8.

A critic writes...

Sir,

All very noble of you to spring in Eye 1215 to the defence of your erstwhile gardening columnist, that fragile and delicate bloom who damned "The Female Of The Species" as "threadbare" and its author Joanna Murray-Smith as "an insane reactionary" without having either seen or read the play. Your own item shows a similar rigour, as evidenced by a few finicky minor details:

*The National Theatre productions you refer to aren't even the latest four **new** plays staged **professionally** at the NT; nearly 20 other works have opened there in the same period, never mind those already in repertoire (and by the way, is the "Emily Pankhurst" you mention any relation to the suffragette leader Emmeline Pankhurst?). The play you reported Eileen Atkins as being "about to bring in" arrived in its West End venue the better part of a fortnight before your issue went to press. It opened in "the playhouse named after dear Johnnie" – that'll be dear Johnnie Vaudeville, then. And most crucially, the author's open acknowledgment of the Germaine Greer hostage incident as "the starting point" of her work is patently not, as you try to make out, a denial that the play has anything to do with it.*

As for your line about "the sneakiest bio-drama ever written": well, there's this thing called – maybe you've heard of it – satire...

I'd go into more detail about the play but, hey, my job involves actually watching shows before I write about them, so what would I know?

Love & hugs,
IAN SHUTTLEWORTH,

Theatre reviewer, Financial Times.

New balls

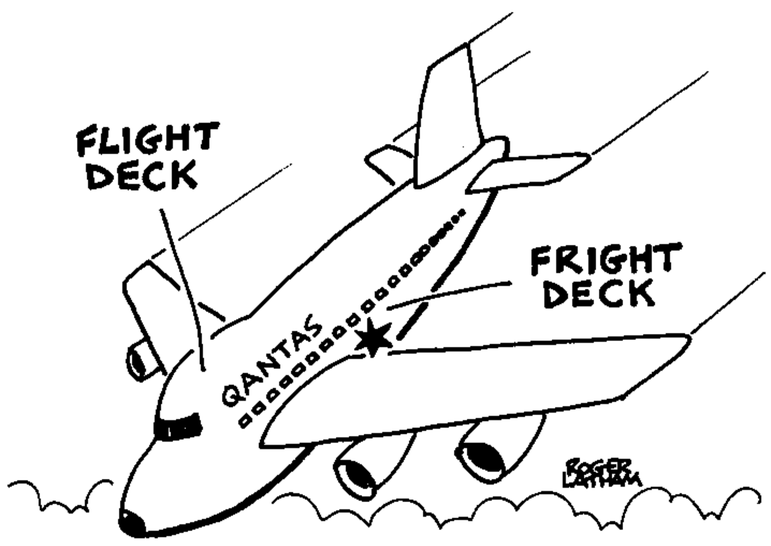
Sir,

Is it you, or Anne Robinson, who were dumb enough to get the date wrong in the question about Arthur Ashe ("Dumb Britain", Eye 1215)? He won Wimbledon in 1975, not 1985. Corrector correct thyself!

ROBERT STONE,

Via email.

● It was indeed 1975. Ed.



Declining standards?

"Do you think I could borrow a cup of money please?"

"Could we borrow a cup of money?"

Sir,

Cartoon by Arnold Wiles in Private Eye 271, 5 May 1972: Woman at doorway: "Do you think I could borrow a cup of money please?"

Cartoon by McLachlan in Private Eye 1214, 11 July 2008: Man at doorway: "Could we borrow a cup of money?"

No "please", you'll notice, in the second cartoon. What a biting comment on the deterioration of civility and manners in British society.

Yours,
STEVE AMOR,

Via email.

Getting the Horne

Sir,

The Street of Shame could be re-titled the Street of Nothing New.

Am I alone in remembering the eccentric(!) J Peasmould Grunthputtock, whose exploits were featured in 'Round the Horne' in the sixties?

On one occasion his conversation with a journalist from a Sunday tabloid was broadcast:
JPG: I want to sell you a story of sex, drink and debauchery on a yacht moored off the south of France.
J: How much do you want?
JPG: Twenty thousand pounds.
J: When did this happen?
JPG: As soon as I get the twenty thousand...

Keep up the good work!

Yours,
DICK LYALL,

Via email.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"It's so hot today you could crack a boiled egg on the pavement and cook it."
DAVID ROTHWELL, Salford City Radio
(Les McLeod)

"We've created a window of opportunity and it's time to walk through that window."
MICKEY ARTHUR, Sky Sports
(Dan Stones)

"It's not as cold as it was yesterday, but that's probably because it's a bit warmer."
SIR IAN BOTHAM, Sky Sports
(Richard Savage)

"Well, Padraig [Harrington], on Wednesday you never thought you could defend your title, let alone win it."
SUE BARKER, BBC1
(John McCready)

"A single parent would only be able to claim benefits for two years and after those two years they would literally be pushed over the cliff."
NORMAN SMITH, Radio 4
(Graham Mytton)

Colemanballs balls

Sir,

Colemanballs derides Jenson Button's "I just have to keep my nose clean, literally, for the first three or four laps tomorrow." As any F1 fule kno, collisions, some involving damaged and dirtied nose cones, have been an all too frequent feature of Jenson's season. He was hoping for a literally clean nose in the race in question, and indeed he achieved it.

When interviewed he said, intending it figuratively, "I just have to keep my nose clean", but as he uttered the phrase he realised its literal application and added with a knowing twinkle "literally".

MIKE HARDING ROBERTS,

Via email.

Horse sense

Sir,

I was puzzled by the comment in 'Ad Nauseam' (Eye 1215) suggesting that Zara Phillips' withdrawal from the Olympics due to an injury to Toytown "lends some credence to the fact that 'the horse does all the work.'" If Zara Phillips and Toytown weren't taking part in the Olympics because Zara had been injured, wouldn't that "lend some credence to the fact that the rider does all the work"?

ANDREW LAVENS,

Via email.

Sir,

Bit unfair to Ms Phillips? After all, had Dean suffered an injury a couple of months before their Olympic triumph, would you have claimed that Torville just hung on and looked pretty?'

Regards,
JIM EWAN,

Via email.

Pedantry Corner

Sir,

Mr Anderson (Eye 1215) cannot have attended many rowing events . There is no reason beyond habit for the stroke of a crew to have his/her blade on stroke side , and crews rigged this way ("mirror rigged") have appeared at the Boat Race for some years . It is, perhaps somewhat unimaginative of your cartoonist not to offer a display of German or Italian rigging (two consecutive blades on the same side , in various combinations) on the boat in question , but you gotta start somewhere ....

ANDREW RUDDLE.

If Lara Croft is the daughter of the Earl of Abingdon, she is Lady Lara Croft.
The Countess is her father's wife.

RICHARD BEVILLE.

Craig Brown writing as Hunter Davies has got things back to front in his Diary (Eye, 1215). Either that or he can't count up to two. Those Number Ones which he says make great collectibles must have needed a few milk bottles for subsequent archive display. Or is he taking the wee-wee? I think he talking a load of Number Twos.

ALAN BUNTING.

Well thank you very much Peter Brocklehurst the patriotic Manxman for scuttling Team GB's only stone-cold certainty for gold at the Peking Olympics. I assume the Olympic authorities will have read Pedantry Corner (Eye 1215) and noted his statement that the Isle of Man is not part of Great Britain, and by now will have expelled super fast cyclist and winner of 4 stages in the Tour de France Mark Cavendish, from the Isle of Man.

JONATHAN HULL.

Letter from **Brasilia**

from Our Own Correspondent

REMOTE, infamously lawless and vast: the most valuable resource on Earth, the Amazon rainforest, is under a "foreign invasion".

It's being bought up and robbed blind, we splutter into our *cafezinhos*; and nothing annoys us Brazilians more than the idea that the Amazon is somehow everybody's.

You gringos are up to no good, that's for sure. Some 5.5m hectares are now under foreign ownership here in Brazil, more than half in the Amazon. Last month our spooks announced that seven NGOs operating in the region were suspected of bio-piracy, land-grabs and mineral exploration, including the US-based Amazon Conservation.

But are we any more capable of looking after an area bigger than Europe – more than 5m square kilometres? Well, in June our government announced that it had "lost" a chunk of the Amazon the size of the UK and France combined, or at least it had no idea what was going on there. That's 710,000 square kilometres, or 14 percent of the area, that is "no man's land" for which no data exists.

New figures showed 14,000 square kilometres were deforested in the latest 12-month period – at least in the known area that hasn't "gone missing". The issue has grown several degrees hotter since the departure in May of environment minister of Marina Silva. Her replacement, Carlos Minc, has come out fighting. The army has been sent into the vast Amazonian state of Pará where Minc triumphantly announced the seizure of 3,100 cows who were to be "barbecued" as a warning to illegal ranchers.

Critics say this is gesture politics. Remember the Earth Summit in Rio 92? Our government received more than US$400m in donations from the evil foreigners to protect the tropical rainforest. Except we forgot to spend a third of it and have to give it back.

Our president, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, has meanwhile defended the 25m people living in the Amazon saying "they too want cars and TVs" – no doubt to watch British eco-warriors like Bruce Parry from a safe distance. But the gringo-bashing goes on. When the Head sports firm millionaire and one-time vice-treasurer of your Conservative party, Johan Eliasch, announced two years ago that his company had bought 160,000 hectares of the Amazon and that the whole region could be had for US$50bn, you could hear the squawking from Rio to Manaus. "I love trees, the forest," Eliasch had whispered, before switching sides to become Gordon Brown's green adviser. The rainforest needs to be bought to be protected, declared the British-Swedish businessman who founded the funky rainforest charity Cool Earth, encouraging anyone to buy half an acre in Brazil or Peru for £35 through its website.

Then in June, after an investigation by Abin, our intelligence agency, Eliasch's local firm, Gethal, was fined £119m for, er, illegally chopping down the equivalent of 230,000 trees in protected Amazônia Legal and for not having proof of ownership of the land, which is rich with gold and diamond deposits. "Most of the wood was destined for exportation," said Adilson Cordeiro, departmental head of the environmental agency, Ibama, who announced plans to cancel Gethal's claimed land titles. Was Eliasch involved in a racket? He says definitely not, but he failed to send a representative to a senate hearing at the beginning of July and a new date has been set for this month.

Not that anyone here is in a rush to find out what's left in the rainforests: the leading biological researcher in the country, according to a 15-year university study released in May, is a Rio judge who searches for plants as a hobby at weekends. Yes, the future of the forest is safe with us.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "We specialise in blockages of the lower colon," Dr Alexander Kharchenko of the Mashuk Akva-Term sanatorium told reporters in Zheleznovodsk (a spa town near Stavropol), "and more than a hundred enemas are carried out here daily. We want people to see this procedure as pleasant and fun, so we recently commissioned the sculptor Svetlana Avakova to create the world's first monument to enemas. Her bronze sculpture was inspired by Botticelli's Venus and Mars, and shows three angelic children raising a gigantic enema bulb syringe above their heads, as though in homage. It weighs 350 kilograms, and cost one million roubles, and we are proud to display it outside the entrance to the sanatorium. It is gorgeous."

Asked why he had commissioned such a bizarre monument, Dr Kharchenko replied that "there are unusual statues appearing all over Russia nowadays. In May, a statue of a baby emerging from a pickle jar was erected outside a maternity hospital in Tomsk, while a monument to the letter ë, or yo, was recently put up in Ulyanovsk. And outside the Druzhba processed cheese factory in Moscow, there's a monument showing a crow and a fox holding a giant Druzhba cheese in their arms. Unfortunately, the cheese was stolen last winter, but the factory owners offered a reward of 100,000 roubles for it, and eventually found it hidden in a large snowdrift." *(Moscow Times, 19/6/08. Spotter: Mike Ling)*

– ● –

● *"Many people don't realise how dangerous bombs and high explosives can be," Dr Thomas Klapötke told a scientific conference at the University of Munich, "and how bad they can be for the environment. TNT and RDX generate toxic gases that pollute the environment when they explode, while unexploded ordnance is highly toxic. It can leach out harmful forms of carbon that poison the ground, and affect the people who handle it.*

"However, we believe we've now solved this problem by creating a new and safer type of bomb. It's based on a newly-developed class of materials called tetrazoles, which derive most of their explosive energy from nitrogen instead of carbon, so they're much better for the environment. We've already made tiny bombs from tetrazoles called HBT and G2ZT, which are not only more stable and less toxic than conventional explosives, but more powerful too. True, they do generate hydrogen cyanide, but we're working on that problem, and soon expect to have a range of completely safe and environmentally-friendly compounds designed especially for large-calibre naval and tank guns." (Live Science, 27/5/08. Spotter: Brendan Joseph O'Byrne)

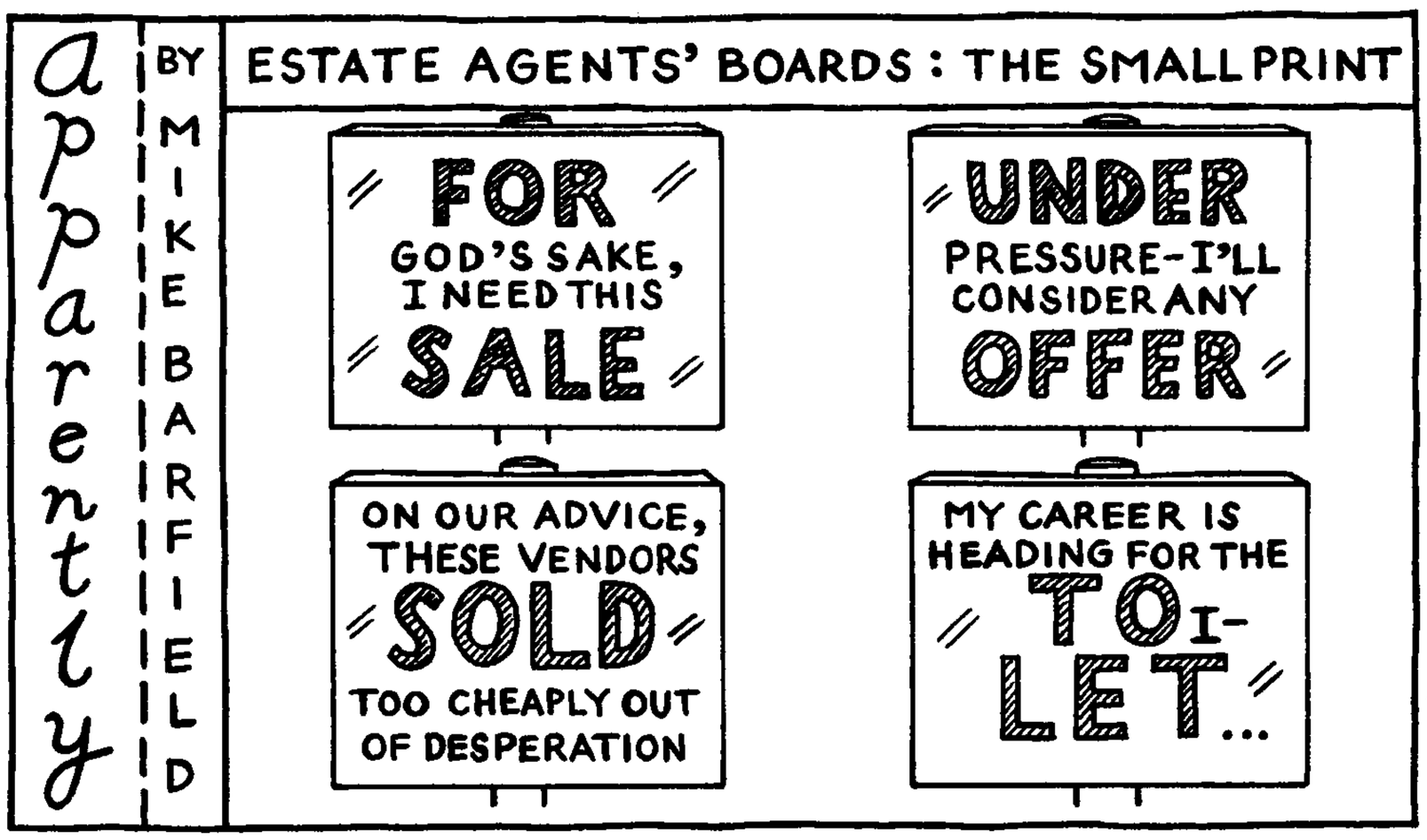
– ● –

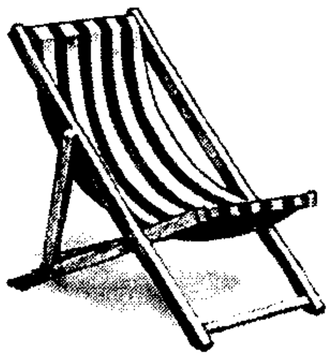
● "We usually have a fairly high turnout for elections," Mayor Darrel Brudevold told reporters in Pillsbury, North Dakota, "with as many as a half-dozen people making it to the polls. But last Tuesday, nobody at all got down there to vote, not even any of the people on the ballot. Everybody has a job here, and they were all busy, including me. I had crops to spray before the rains came, my wife was busy with the post office and her beauty shop, and everyone else seems to have had something else to do. We all assumed at least one person would show up to vote, but they didn't, and now nobody knows what to do next."

The Barnes County farming community of Pillsbury – population 11 – made election history on June 10, when none of the six

candidates (running unopposed for re-election to the posts of mayor and five aldermen) polled a single vote. "If just one person had voted," Mayor Brudevold observed, "we'd all have won by one vote, and things would be fine. The County auditor has told us that we should all appoint someone to do our jobs until the next election, so I guess we'll all appoint ourselves. When you're a little village, nobody really cares. In fact, most people don't even make it to council meetings, and we only hold those five times a year. The only time people turn up is when we want to raise taxes. Then everybody shows up." *(Bismarck Tribune [North Dakota], 16/6/08. Spotter: Mal Function)*

Apparently BY MIKE BARFIELD


ESTATE AGENTS' BOARDS: THE SMALL PRINT
FOR GOD'S SAKE, I NEED THIS SALE
UNDER PRESSURE - I'LL CONSIDER ANY OFFER
ON OUR ADVICE, THESE VENDORS SOLD TOO CHEAPLY OUT OF DESPERATION
MY CAREER IS HEADING FOR THE TOI- LET...



PRIME MINISTERIAL DECREE NO. 26

From the Deckchair of the Supreme Leader

Comrades!

By the time you read these words, I shall have completed my period of relaxation at the British seaside, having achieved my recreational target of no fewer than five and a quarter days of leisure-based work activity.

But I assure you all that throughout this time I have been fully vigilant in protecting the interest of both the Party and the nation.

And do not think that I have failed to observe the machinations of those who would undermine the foundations of all that I have worked for, gnawing like envious rats at the deckchair of state, hoping that it will collapse leaving me sprawled on the shingle like a beached whale.

I am, of course, above all referring to the treacherous manoevrings of the neo-Blairite lickspittle Miliband.

Not for a moment are we taken in by his empty pledges of loyalty and protestations of undying support for the Supreme Leader.

Who was it, I ask, who entrusted Comrade Miliband with his present high office of state, which permits him to strut across the world stage, making his vacuous speeches on matters which he knows nothing about?

The pathetic, jumped-up ambitionist Miliband was always hopelessly unfitted for this post and it was only out of the goodness of my heart that I was prepared to overlook his manifest personal failings and his imbecilic posturing.

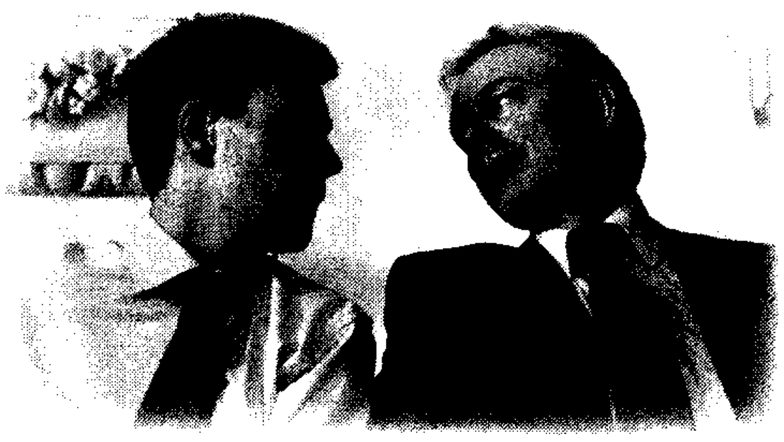
It was I alone who made him everything he is today. And how does this puffed-up toad and slimy viper reward me?

Comrades, he seeks to overthrow me. Egged on by a rabble of failed neo-Blairite nonentities, led by Comrades Straw, Purnell, Burnham and the rest of the Politburo, Miliband does not have the courage to face me in an open contest, but hopes that, by hanging around behind the scenes, spreading poison and engaging in malevolent plotting, he will force a tired and demoralised Supreme Leader to relinquish power and hand over to him the helm of state, without even the formality of a proper democratic election.

I have never known such an outrageous act of disloyalty in the long history of our Party.

And let us not be deceived for a moment as to who lies behind this conspiracy – the puppet master who pulls the strings of the marionette Miliband? It is of course the hated former leader ex-comrade Blair who is consumed by envy and bitterness at my outstanding success as supreme leader. The so-called secret memo uncovered by my spymasters reveals the Blairite Plot in all its sinister duplicity. Blair writes: "GB is dissing our great record of achievements like er...er... schools, hospitals, Iraq etc. No wonder the public have turned against him and are calling with one voice for me to return and rescue the nation from this blundering incompetent."

PROOF OF TREASON



The co-conspirators secretly filmed at a clandestine meeting

Comrades, have you ever read a more treacherous manifesto of malevolence? Is this not evidence of the ultimate evil?

Let me assure you that I am not prepared to put up with this. I will not meekly stand by whilst the plotters sharpen their daggers. Oh, no – as the great supreme leader comrade Major put it before his sad downfall.

I will be taking firm, decisive action to put a stop to this. Just as soon as my heavy burden of responsibility allows me time to think up a response. Possibly in the autumn. If not sooner. Maybe.

Signed

Gordon Brown

The Supreme Ditherer

Dave Snooty AND HIS PALS

IT'S JOLLY IMPORTANT TO HAVE A HOLIDAY AND GET AWAY FROM IT ALL...
...AND SHOW THAT I CAN GET AWAY FROM IT ALL MUCH BETTER THAN GORDON!
LOVELY VIEWS, DAVE - NOT TOO RADICAL AND THEY WON'T OFFEND ANYONE!
WE'RE GOING FORTHE FLOATING VOTER, CHORTLE! CHORTLE
UTTERLY WET SUIT
LOOK WHO'S WASHED UP, EH, READERS?
FANCY A CORNISH PASTING, GORDON?
TUG!
SERF'S UP!
KICK!
SEA-WEEDY

THE Sun

SO WHO *DID* KILL JILL DANDO? asks *The Sun*

WAS IT:

a) Robert Murat?

b) Max Mosely?

c) Radovan Karadzic?

d) The drug dealer bloke from Antigua who we've got on the front page under the headline 'WHO KILLED THE HONEYMOON COUPLE'?

e) Michael Barrymore?

f) We don't know.

(Answer: f)

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam Alexander Solzhenitsyn (1918 - 2008)

So. Farewell
Then Alexander
Solzhenitsyn.

Famous Russian
Writer.

Author of *A Day In The Life of Ivan Denisovich*
And *The Gulag Archipelago.*

I hope you
Have not been
Sent to

The Great Gulag
Below.

E.J. Thribb (17½)

● Thribb will be appearing at the Edinburgh Poetry Festival Fringe Fringe at Venue 1734, Mrs McKay's Tearoom, Irving Street, where he will be reading from his collection of threnodies, *Just So Farewell Then Stories* (Kipling Press, £25.99).

Heath Sledger

WEEPING CAPTAIN DOESN'T QUIT

THE world of politics was not rocked to its foundation today when skipper Gordon Vaughan did not stand down after failing in another Test.

A non-tearful captain told reporters: "This is not the saddest day of my life. You know when it is time to go and it is definitely not now.

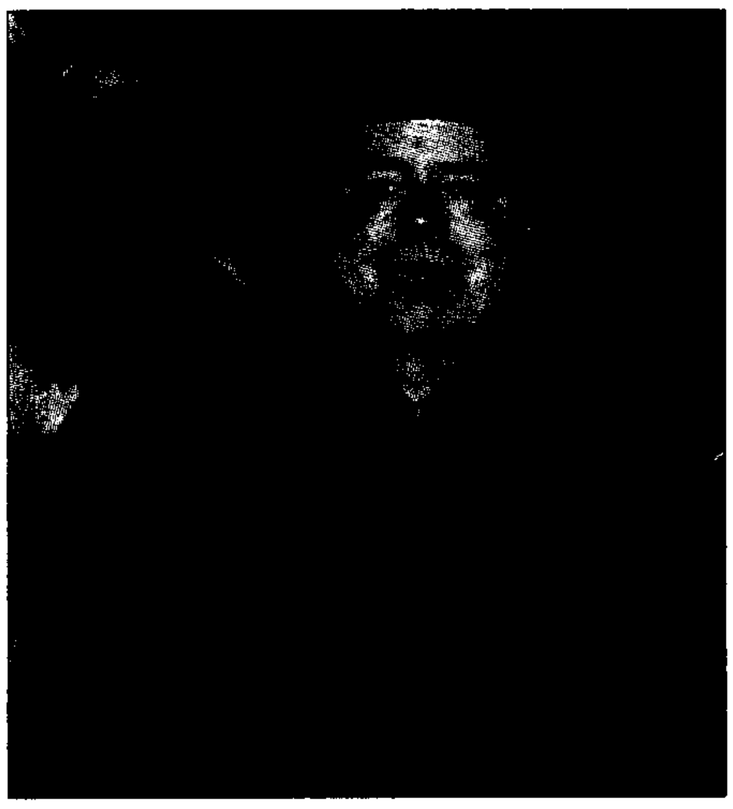
The selectors, however, have a number of names in mind who could do the job equally badly if not worse.

They include Alan "Johnners" Johnson, spinner Dave Miliband, veteran Jack Straw and Rachel Heyhoe-Harman, the England Ladies Captain.

Late Score

Labour.....37 all out

Tories.....381 without loss



That Honorary Fellowship Citation In Full

SALUTAMUS FRANCISCUM WHEENUM ALUMNUS HARROVIANUS ET LOOKALIKUS IANUS DUNCANO-SMITHO COLUMNISTICUS MULTOS ANNOS IN GRAUNIADO INDEPENDENTEQUE ET PRIVATO OCULI QUOQUE SCRIPTOR MULTORUM LIBRORUM INCLUDANS BIOGRAPHICOS *TOMASO DRIBERGO* NOTORIUS PREDATOR HOMOSEXUALIS ET *KARLI MARXI* COMMUNISTICUS PHILOSOPHUS ET *MUMBUS JUMBUS* SED FAMOSSIMO PER GIGANTICAS QUANTITAS LIBATIONES ALCOHOLICIS BIBULOSSISSIMUM PRANDIOS MULTAS HORAS CUM HACCIS PISSARTICIS IN DOMUM PUBLICUM *(SATIS WHEENI. EDITOR.)*. GAUDEAMUS!

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WORSHIPPERS DEMAND SALMAN BOOK BE BURNED

by Our Religious Staff **Willie Rushdie**

THERE WAS outcry last night over the publication of a new book which contains a blasphemous description of the prophet Salman, revered by millions of Salmanists throughout the world.

The book, *On Her Majesty's Service* by Ron Evans with Douglas Thompson, describes Salman as "mean and arrogant", and has already caused huge offence in the Salmanist world where any criticism of the prophet is regarded as deserving the death penalty.

Said one Salmanist, "This book should be consigned to the flames along with its author, whose tongue should be cut out before he can repeat his blasphemous lies against Salman (May he write for ever)."

"Whatever next?" cried another. "Will people be allowed to say his books aren't very good?"

ANTHONY WORRALL THOMPSON'S Summer salad

Ingredients

Lettuce, rocket, henbane, deadly nightshade, hemlock, yew berries, deathscap mushroom, teaspoonful cyanide.

Directions

Place in a bowl, toss lightly and serve to rival chefs before watching them die in agony leaving all top TV slots to yours truly!

WAR CRIMINAL DISCOVERED POSING AS 'FAITH HEALER'

by **Lunchtime O'Bosnia**

ONE of the world's most wanted war criminals, Tony Blair, has been tracked down in a leafy West London square, where he has been runing an obscure 'New Age' organisation known as DAFT (Drawing All Faiths Together).

Few of the residents of the fashionable square were aware that the man living at number 29 – whom they knew as 'that DAFT bloke at number 29' – was second only to his fellow war criminal, the Rev. Dubya Bush, on the world's most wanted list.

Between them the two men were responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands of innocent civilians between the years 2003 and the present day.

Blair Route

One of Mr Blair's neighbours, Lebanese restaurateur, Mr Ahmed Falafel, said last night, "He seemed a very nice gentleman. He and his wife used to come into my restaurant at lunchtime and ask for a free meal."

"I had no idea they had been mixed up in anything nasty like the Iraq war."

Mr Blair's wife Cherie was also known locally for her interest in New Age rituals, particularly the healing power of money.

The Blairs believed that if you had a huge pile of money in the bank, it made you feel 'much better'.

But now it is time for the supposed holy man to face the world's justice by being given even more money *(surely 'being dragged in front of those judges in the Hague'? Ed.)*

"God knows why they do it, but sometimes they beach themselves..."

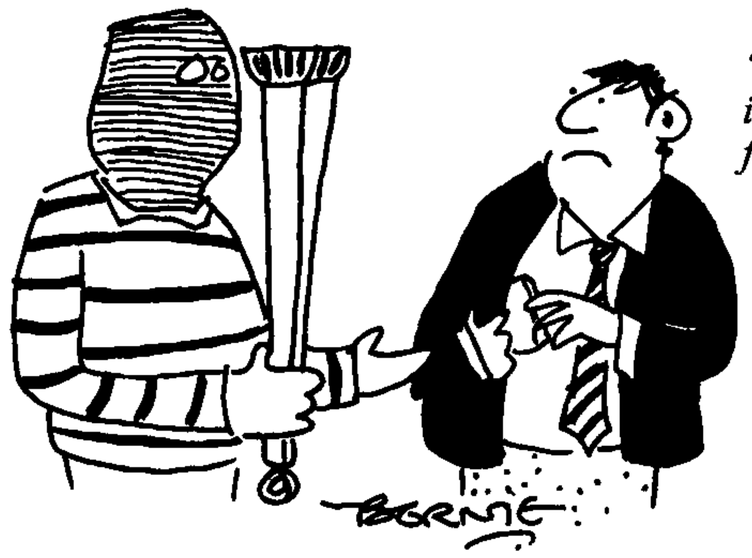
'BUMBLING NERD' BROKE INTO PENTAGON AND CREATED HAVOC

by Our Defence Staff **Jim Hacker**

A MAN described as a "bumbling nerd" broke into the Pentagon and remained there for several years, leaving an astonishing trail of chaos behind him with a series of "juvenile and irresponsible pranks", ranging from an invasion of Iraq to an invasion of Iran.

The bespectacled lunatic was last night named as Don "Donny" Rumsfeld, 63, who claimed that he had hacked his way into the heart of the Pentagon only in the hope of discovering "intelligent life".

After meeting President Bush, he abandoned his quest, and began to vandalise *(Cont. p. 94)*



"I did prison courses in costume making and furniture restoration"

KNACKER DEFENDS 'GIVING OUT CONTRACT' TO BEST FRIEND

By Our Serious Crime Staff **Baroness Scotland-Yard**

INSPECTOR 'Knacker of the Yard' Knacker today defended his award of a £1 million contract to his best friend.

Knacker had first met Mr Ronald McDodgy when they were on a skiing holiday in the Swiss resort of Grosse Scheister.

The two men immediately formed a strong bond, thanks to their shared interest in one of them getting a contract from the other.

It's A Blair Cop

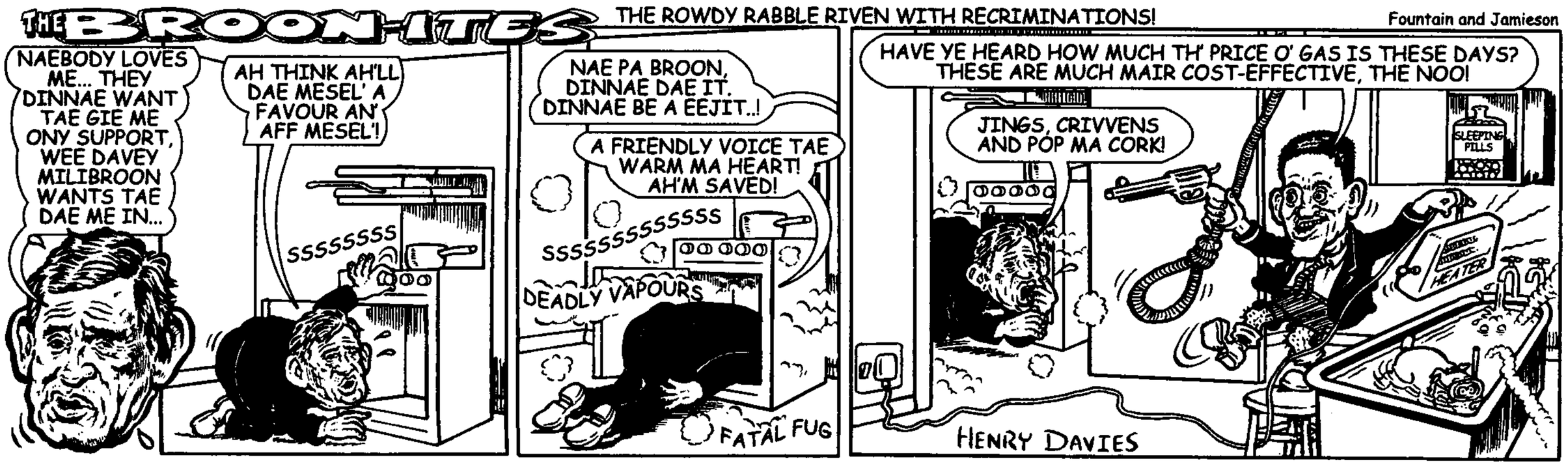
When asked what services Mr McDodgy's firm had provided the Metropolitan Police, the Inspector said, "Considering there were large amounts of money involved, it would have been quite improper for me to know what services his company was offering.".

"All I know is that he was the best friend for the job."

That Boris Johnson /Sir Ian Blair Email In Full

Blimey! This Blair chap sounds a bit of a rum cove. I mean he thinks he's frightfully clever just 'cos he went to Oxford, keeps making the most fearful gaffes yet still stays in his job, and to top it all he gives work to his old mates! Cripes! What a good egg! My kind of chap! Lay off him you stinkers! You hear me!

Signed
Bo-Jo
Mayor of London


THE BROON-ITES
THE ROWDY RABBLE RIVEN WITH RECRIMINATIONS!
Fountain and Jamieson
NAEBODY LOVES ME... THEY DINNAE WANT TAE GIE ME ONY SUPPORT, WEE DAVEY MILIBROON WANTS TAE DAE ME IN...
AH THINK AH'LL DAE MESEL' A FAVOUR AN' AFF MESEL'!
SSSSSSSS
NAE PA BROON, DINNAE DAE IT. DINNAE BE A EEJIT..!
A FRIENDLY VOICE TAE WARM MA HEART! AH'M SAVED!
SSSSSSSSSSSS
DEADLY VAPOURS
FATAL FUG
HAVE YE HEARD HOW MUCH TH' PRICE O' GAS IS THESE DAYS? THESE ARE MUCH MAIR COST-EFFECTIVE, THE NOO!
JINGS, CRIVVENS AND POP MA CORK!
SLEEPING PILLS
HEATER
HENRY DAVIES

MILIBAND'S SHOCK CHALLENGE TO BROWN

by Our Entire Political Staff **Sir Peter O'Bore**

THE WORLD of Westminster was rocked to its foundations last night by an astonishing and naked bid for power by Foreign Secretary David Miliband.

Making no pretence of his desire to replace Gordon Brown as soon as possible, Miliband

carefully avoided mentioning the Prime Minister by name as he called for renewal and modernisation "right at the top of the Labour party".

Miliband Of Brothers

Miliband chose the traditional assassin's weapon of a boring piece in the *Guardian* to put the boot in to his leader.

In a blatant call for his colleagues to oust Brown by the end of the week, Miliband tells MPs, "Have a nice break, enjoy your holiday, forget about boring old politics, get a life."

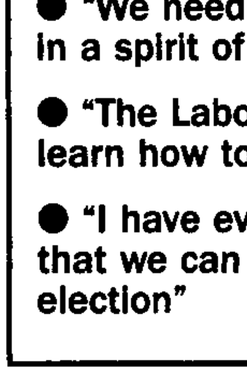
This was widely interpreted as a savage assault on everything Mr Brown has stood for in his year in Number 10.

Although Mr Miliband was careful not to push his own claims to succeed to the leadership too obviously, his repeated use of the phrase "it is time for a modern Labour Party in a modern Britain" was widely seen as the opening salvo in the battle for the soul of the Labour Party that will soon be engulfing Britain this autumn.

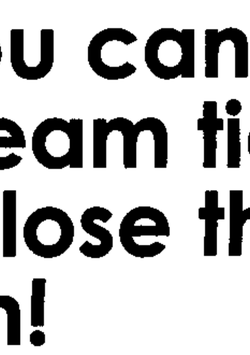
WHAT HE SAID	WHAT HE MEANT
● "We need to move forward in a spirit of change"	● *"We need to move forward in a spirit of change"*
● "The Labour party has to learn how to listen"	● *"Good Evening"*
● "I have every confidence that we can win the next election"	● *"Vote Conservative"*

Now you can make your own dream ticket to help Labour lose the next election!

Just choose any two of the following front-runners to be the leader and deputy leader of the Labour Party – and hey presto, election's lost!

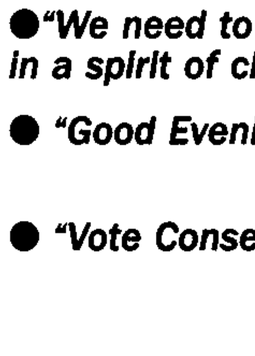


Harriet Harman, 56. Charismatic, feisty, high-flyer. Sees herself as very much 'the one in charge'. ***Downside:*** Everyone hates her.



Jack Straw, 73. Charismatic, Safe pair of hands. Experienced, dependable, uncharismatic. ***Downside:*** Everyone hates him.

Alan Johnson, 61. Charismatic former postman



and leading Blairite. Could be safe pair of hands. ***Downside:*** Everybody hates him.

Ed Balls, 17. Charismatic schoolboy (surely 'school minister'?) who refuses to put up his safe pair of hands over SATs fiasco. ***Downside:*** Everyone really hates him.

Dave Miliburn *(see profile above)*

Advertisement

NEW LABOUR PIZZA

NOT BROWN - BUT GOLDEN!
Mmm! PERFECT - TO GO!!

BROWN MEETS OSAMA

EMBATTLED Prime Minister Gordon Brown was accused today of trying to boost his sagging image by posing for pictures with popular terrorist Osama Bin Laden.

"Osama Bin Laden has the sort of approval ratings and charisma that Brown can only dream of," said one swarthy man with a dynamite-themed belt.

"But seeing them together in Downing Street merely highlighted how unpopular Gordon Brown is."

SUPERMARKET

"We're trying to discourage carrier bag use"

Beijing Olympics

SIX TO WATCH

Synghman Ree-Smogg, Korean hurdler, hotly tipped to win gold if he can see the hurdles.

Griff Rees-Smogg, Welsh-born synchronised discus thrower could be Britain's best hope for an athletics bronze if only he can see where to throw it.

Amala Smogadishu, Somali long-distance runner, hotly tipped to win her country's first medal if she can find her way to the start of the 10,000 metres.

Pi-Su-Pah, female Chinese pole-vaulter, hotly tipped to win one of China's thousands of gold medals, if she can rise above the clouds of toxic gas.

As Ma Tik, Malaysian 100-kilometre skateboarding champion, hotly tipped to drop dead of pollution in the early stages of the race.

Algae Cluff, one-time Spectator owner, whose luxury yacht could win the new cruising class if they can only clear the two million tons of chemical effluent currently swamping the Olympic yachting venue.

Boden. Summer Range

Dave is wearing a safe pair of shorts with solid traditional seat and deep pockets. There are no flies, not on Dave. His outfit is topped with a matching blue lightweight polo shirt with Eton collar. Made from 100% organic Willet and designed exclusively for us by Osborne & George, it's perfect for playing frisbee and having your picture taken by the national press. Best accompanied by Hoodie *(not shown)* from the trendy 'Goveboy' Range *(not shown).*

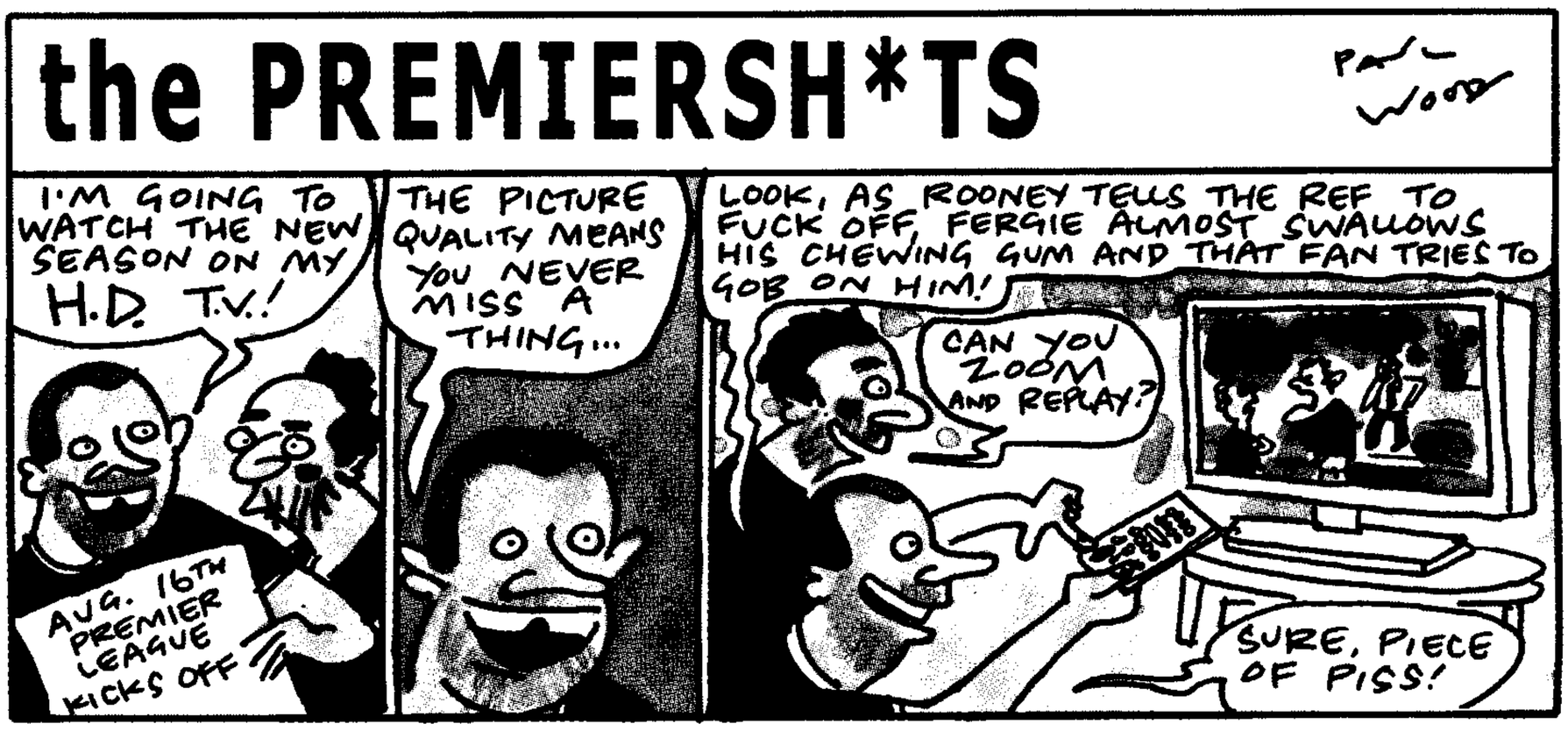
Accessories

Fruity wife comes at no additional cost and looks stylish, cool and electable

Gone for a BURTON

- Brown trousers with a tight belt
- Hair shirt
- Straight jacket
- Shoes you don't want to be in.

Comes with sensible wife and *(That's enough catalogue. Ed)*


the PREMIERSH*TS
PAUL WOOD
I'M GOING TO WATCH THE NEW SEASON ON MY H.D. T.V.!
AUG. 16TH PREMIER LEAGUE KICKS OFF
THE PICTURE QUALITY MEANS YOU NEVER MISS A THING...
LOOK, AS ROONEY TELLS THE REF TO FUCK OFF, FERGIE ALMOST SWALLOWS HIS CHEWING GUM AND THAT FAN TRIES TO GOB ON HIM!
CAN YOU ZOOM AND REPLAY?
SURE, PIECE OF PISS!

MODERN INN SIGNS

A MESSAGE TO THE PEOPLE OF BRITAIN

FROM THE LEADER OF THE BRITISH UNION OF MASOCHISTS

Sir Max Mosley writes:

People of Britain. Today I have won a great victory for your freedoms. Thanks to me you will now all be free to exercise your inalienable right to be whipped in the privacy of your home by highly-trained prostitutes speaking in German.

But this is only the beginning.

Together we shall sweep away the reactionary forces of the prurient gutter-press, to create a pure, healthy, shame-free nation of spankers and spankees.

What could be a more glorious vision of the future of our island nation?

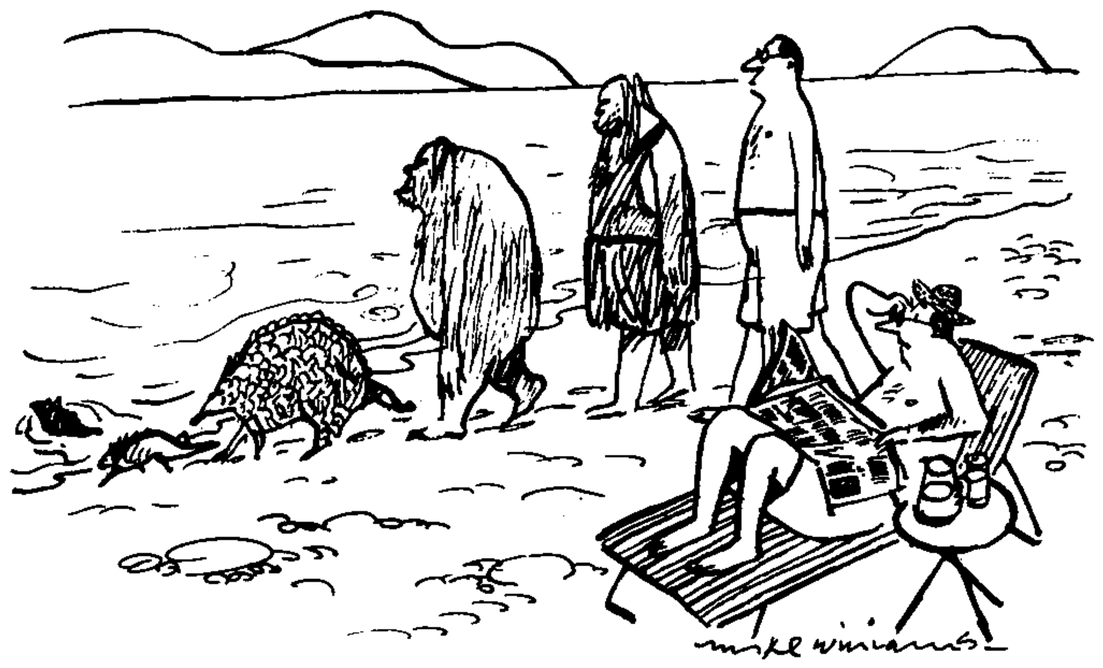
Join with me as I sue every paper in the land and we all sing together that rousing British anthem "Britains ever, ever, ever shall be slaves."

HEIL HITME!

(Signed)

Sir Max Mosley

Leader of the BUM (The Black Leathers)



POLLY FILLER'S ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO WHAT TO DO WITH THE KIDS OVER SUMMER

IT'S that ghastly time of year again. Eight weeks of Holiday Hell stretching into the distance with nothing to relieve the misery. How can you stop yourself from going stark staring bonkers?

Well now help is at hand. Here's Polly's tried-and-tested survival tips for what to do with the little monsters.

1. Dump the children with your parents and head for the Med – sorted! It's good for them to bond with their grandparents even if they are not as well as they used to be!?! Buck up Mum!!

2. Dump the children on the nanny and reach for the beach! Honestly – you are doing yourself a favour. She gets to see the heartwarming new movie 'WALL-E' 25 times as well as learning new skills (like industrial-scale ironing and cleaning out the hamster cage) – she even gets to improve her English vocabulary, including useful phrases like "Where do I buy wallpaper paste, your mother has told me to redecorate the nursery?"

3. Dump the children with your friends-with-the-only child! They are off to Portugal anyway and they'll be only too grateful for some company for their spoilt, annoying brat! No offence Zak and Sabrina but *even you* think Che is a nightmare!!

4. Dump the children in the Pied Piper Children's Hotel near Newbury and fly to Dubai!! Kids *love* it at Pied Pipers – whatever they say!!

5. Dump the children in summer camp. There are hundreds of camps all over England offering a great range of activities – for parents!! Like diving in the Maldives and shopping in New York whilst the kids have an old-fashioned British outdoor holiday and make new friends with some midges.

6. Look after the children yourself – only joking!

Happy Holidays!

© P. Filler 2008.

NEWS OF THE END OF THE WORLD

SODOM AND GOMORRAH FURIOUS OVER 'PRIVACY INVASION'

by Our Old Testament Staff **Max Moses**

THE residents of Sodom and Gomorrah were last night threatening to sue the Bible over revelations about their sexual lives. The Bible claimed that the people of Sodom and Gomorrah had indulged in acts of wild depravity and orgies of unnatural and obscene carnality.

The people, however, have furiously condemned the Bible, claiming that whatever they get up to in private is their own affair and is of no public interest.

Said a spokesman, "Now-adays this sort of thing is perfectly acceptable and it really is no business of the Bible's prurient muckrakers to suggest that in some way we deserve to be consumed by fire."

Methuselah is 694.

WESTON-SUPER-MARE'S PEER BURNT OUT

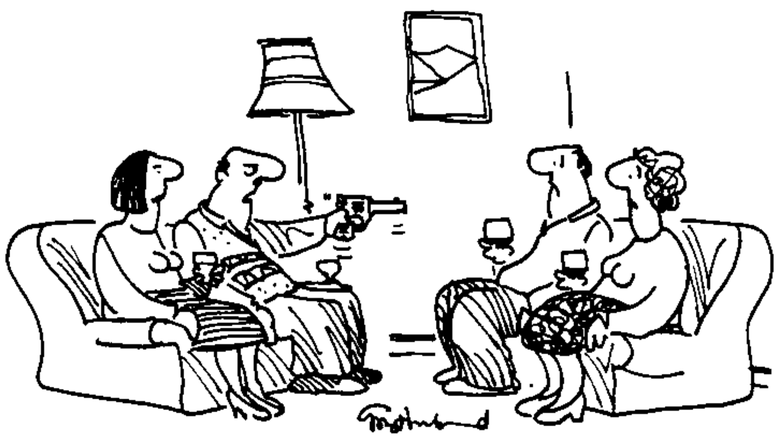
by Our Heritage Correspondent **Lynne National-Trust**

ONE of the nation's best-loved heritage items, Lord Archer of Weston-super-Mare, went up in smoke yesterday, in what was described as "a disaster for anyone who loves England".

The famous peer had given generations of holidaymakers hours of innocent fun with his long succession of best-selling books, which they read on the beach before leaving them behind in their hotel rooms.

Who could forget such legendary entertainments as *A Quiverful Of Lies*, *My Fragrant Wife* and *First Among Arseholes*?

Yet now he is no more than a twisted wreck, alone and abandoned on the foreshore, with nothing to remind him of the glory days when, by his own account, he was the first man to land on the moon, won a gold medal at the Berlin Olympics and rubbed shoulders with such political giants as Norman Fowler, John Selwyn Gummer and Peter Bottomley.



"OK, it's getting late. Will you go home now?

LATE NEWS

BRITISH GAS 'PUTS PROFITS UP'

BRITISH GAS today defended its shock announcement that it would be putting profits up over the next twelve months by a whopping 35 percent.

"Obviously a company such as ours thinks long and hard about the effect on our bonuses before taking the decision to put profits up massively," said the chief executive of British Gas's parent company Centrica.

"But if we're to continue the board's massive investment programme in second homes in Provence and first-class holidays to the Caribbean then a rise in profits such as this is unavoidable."

British Gas refuses to rule out another massive wave of profit increases in 2009.

(Reuters)

BANKS' NEW OFFER

BRITAIN'S high street banks announced today they would be going head to head with Tesco as they revealed ambitious plans to start selling fruit and veg in their branches.

"We have recognised, in the wake of the credit crunch, that there is no money to be made from current accounts and mortgages," said one senior banker.

"But clearly Tesco is coining it in so we want a bit of that action.

"We have set ourselves very ambitious targets to secure 25 percent of the cucumber, red pepper and frozen pea market by 2011, although if we mess up we want the tax-payer to buy up all the rotten fruit and veg."

(Rotters)

AMY DRUG SHOCK

AMY Winehouse's father has claimed the singer collapsed at home after someone spiked her crack cocaine with ecstasy.

"What sort of a monster would do this to my sweet innocent Amy?

"They'll be putting LSD in her heroin next," said Mitch *(contd p. 94)* *(Reuters)*

LAKE BOTTOM PLUMBED

RUSSIAN scientists plumbing the depths of Lake Baikal in Siberia say they have broken the world record for the deepest dive on earth.

"We've beaten the previous record held by Gordon Brown's opinion poll figures last month" said a delighted spokesperson.

(Reuters)

From The Message Boards

Members of the online community respond to the major issues of the day...

Council Enforcement Officers told not to tackle rowdy youths

Has anyone seen these lanky streaks of piss? My old mum could have the lot of them with one hand behind her back. Here's an idea, get rid of the political correctness enforcement officers and get some proper enforcers. Then find the biggest yob and chiv him in front of his mates. Just a couple of stripes, nothing silly. If they still want some after that then do the rest. It worked in the old days – a mother could leave her boy on a bench outside the Elephant without worrying that his best coat would be covered in blood while she did her shopping. – ***Bermondsey Bob***

too right bob mate mark em like they use to – ***Meet_Stanley***

They bring in dragon-ien punishment's for text-ing wile driv-ing becous a car is a dangerus weopon, well if they cant jail kid's for carry-ing a blade then y not arrest them for text-ing while in posesing of a dangerus weopon! ☺ "NOW" theres a SHANK i-con on facebook so kid's can stab thereselvs online, dont laugh its true – ***Broken_Britan***

The Facebook "shank" symbol is, as I understand it, a humorous way of "sticking the knife" into a friend – no more harmful in its way than wielding a sharp tongue (an antique weapon now sadly blunted by the declining standard of spoken English!). All the same, it suggests that street argot and gang "culture" is now ubiquitous, and it is this "phenomenon" that we should therefore endeavour to understand. Why, we must ask, do today's youngsters consider it "cool" to be stabbed? – ***Edwin***

wize wrds edwin. tel me – iz edwin short for cedric? – ***Zaks_bak***

David Cameron's bike stolen

The fat little numpty probly had a saddlebag full of sensitive security information, or is that stuff kept in the gasguzzler car that drives along behind mister I am so greener than thou?!!!! ● the mans an embarisment to his own dignety. How utterly typicle of browns useless incompertent government – he cant even find a half decent person to be minister for the opositien – ***No_Justice_UK***

Brussels relaxes rules on irregular-shaped fruit and vegetables

Tippical the buracrat's done a you turn and now there force-ing us to buy bent banarna's and cuecumber's!! "WELL" peter mandalson in urope probly like's that sort of thing "but" NORMEL ENGLISH PEPLE DO NOT!!! ●●● – ***England_till_I_die***

80% of Britons believe aliens exist

The other 20% have clearly never visited our inner cities. – ***Brown_out***

Do Britons still exist? – ***Cyril_the_cynic***

Lovin' it guys!! – ***Bogbrush***

Advertisement

EX-PRESENTER LOANS

Have you recently lost your million pound job turning over boxes on *Countdown*?

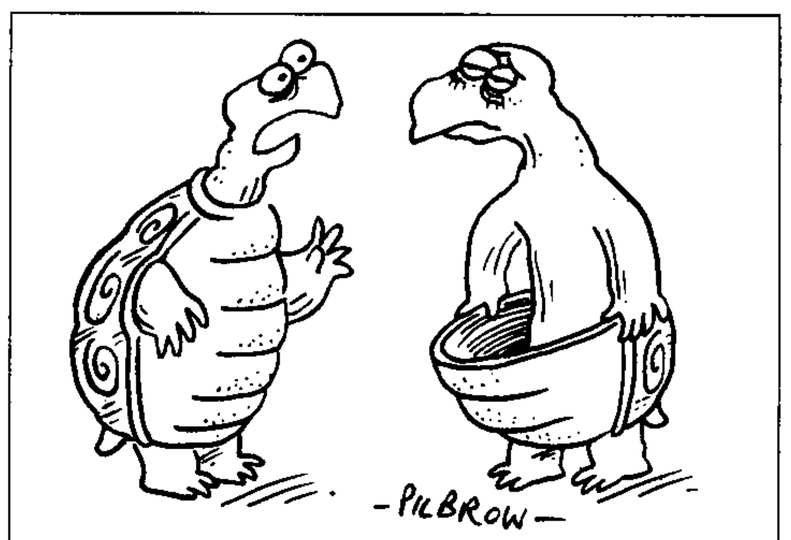
You have? Great.

That means you'll be strapped for cash, so now you can take out one of those dodgy finance loans you've been flogging on the telly for years.

With our no-fuss 800% interest per annum terms, you don't need to be a financial wiz to see how the charges will start to add up.

If you miss a payment, and you don't know what will happen, we'll always be in your ear, whispering the correct answer that we will be round within thirty seconds to break one of your legs from the top, and three of your other limbs from anywhere else.

So don't consonant consonant vowel consonant with us, or else.



"So how did the divorce go?"

CAMILLA IN BEE DRAMA

DIARY

GERMAINE GREER'S A-Z OF HANDY OPINIONS

Astley, Rick: Rick Astley was always an infinitely greater poet and singer than Bob Dylan. Whenever he sang "Never Gonna Give You Up", I would simply howl from the beauty of it all. God knows why the British haven't erected a statue to Astley in Trafalgar Square. For crying out loud, it's high time we took the genocidal one-eyed midget Nelson off his perch and renamed it Astley's Column.

Brown, Gordon: Mark my words, the guy will never be Prime Minister. We've all been begging Blair to go for years now, but where's it got us? Blair will never give up his luxury pad in Number 10 Downing Street – where the British Prime Minister lives and works – without one helluva struggle. Take it from me, that's why Gordon will remain Chancellor for the foreseeable future – and it's this country's great loss, because the guy would bring real passion and gravitas to the job, as well as a much-needed lightness of touch.

Chairs: Who said that chairs are somehow 'good' for sitting on? Whoever it was should be ceremonially tortured, then slaughtered. Somehow, the idea has got around that this object with four so-called 'legs' makes the perfect place to rest your posterior, or arse as I prefer to call it. But everybody knows that chairs are the most uncomfortable objects in the world for sitting on. Personally, I'd always prefer to remain standing, and from now on wherever I am I'm going to insist on my right to stand, including, please note, on airplanes.

Dishes, Washing the: The best way to wash the dishes is to smash them with a hammer, bin them, and buy some new ones. And in the long run, it's best for the environment too.

Einstein, Albert: Let's not kid ourselves, the guy didn't know the first thing about science.

Fish: What truly gets on my nerves about fish is that they steadfastly refuse to walk anywhere. Why should the rest of us have to walk – and in the case of the oppressed women of Zambia, sometimes many, many miles – while those fish are allowed to loll around in the sea? We as a society desperately need to right this wrong.

Global Warming: All the world experts on the subject, including myself, recognise that global warming is caused by greenhouses. They may look like little huts made of glass but believe me they are the death-traps of civilisation. Logic dictates that the only way of stopping the effect is to get rid of the greenhouse. So for crying out loud, let's place an all-out ban on greenhouses. Period.

Harrods: The smallest shop in London. Never has anything in stock.

Iraq: Let's put it in words of one syllable. It is the over-rated Barack Obama who must take all the blame for the invasion of Iraq. But he's got off scot-free. Just because he is who he is, his fellow WASPS are standing by him. Just imagine how he'd have been treated by the media if the guy had been black.

Jordan: Together with her man, Peter Andre, Jordan is the one authentic genius this country has produced in the past half-century.

Kangaroos: The worst hoppers in the world.

Mills, Heather: The woman was always the more talented of the two – Paul McCartney is constitutionally incapable of writing a decent tune – but people hate talent so of course she's despised. Meanwhile, Mills is a modern-day Venus with the brains of an Einstein.

Norway: The cultural centre of the universe and don't you dare say I'm wrong.

One-Way Streets: Are our policemen – pigs as we used to know them in more enlightened times – getting a whole lot more stupid? Yesterday, one of them stopped me in my car as I was going down a one-way street. "You're going the wrong way," he said. "For pity's sake," I replied. "I am only going ONE WAY down this street. I'll go the other way when I come back, but not before. Out of my way – pig!"

This erosion of our civil liberties has been going on far too long. It's high time we all did something about it.

Pineapple: I hate pineapple. It should be banned.

Quince: I adore quince, the Picasso of fruits. But just because other people are too stupid to appreciate it, you never see it in the shops. It makes my blood boil. Why should something be banned just because some people happen to hate it?

Rice: I love rice. Why am I the only person in the world who eats it these days?

Slums: Undeniably the nicest, cleanest, most prosperous part of any city. For those who continue to complain about slums, let me remind them of this. I was recently walking around in a slum area of Delhi and I discovered a hardback book of mine there. Two months later, I was in Waterstone's Piccadilly and when I asked for the same book they curtly informed me they were out of stock! It forcibly strikes me that as a nation, we must urgently rethink our whole idea of what is and what is not a slum.

Tess of the D'Urbervilles: Thomas Hardy had no right – no right whatsoever – to write a book about me without my express permission. His presumption in this matter represents a total invasion of my rights to privacy. May I also point out that, like many a hack before him, he has got a startling number of the facts wholly wrong. FACT: I was born in Australia, not Wessex. FACT: I was christened Germaine, not Tess, a name I have long despised. FACT: I was never impregnated by a man called Alec, and neither did he abandon me. FACT: I have never – I repeat NEVER – been arrested and hanged.

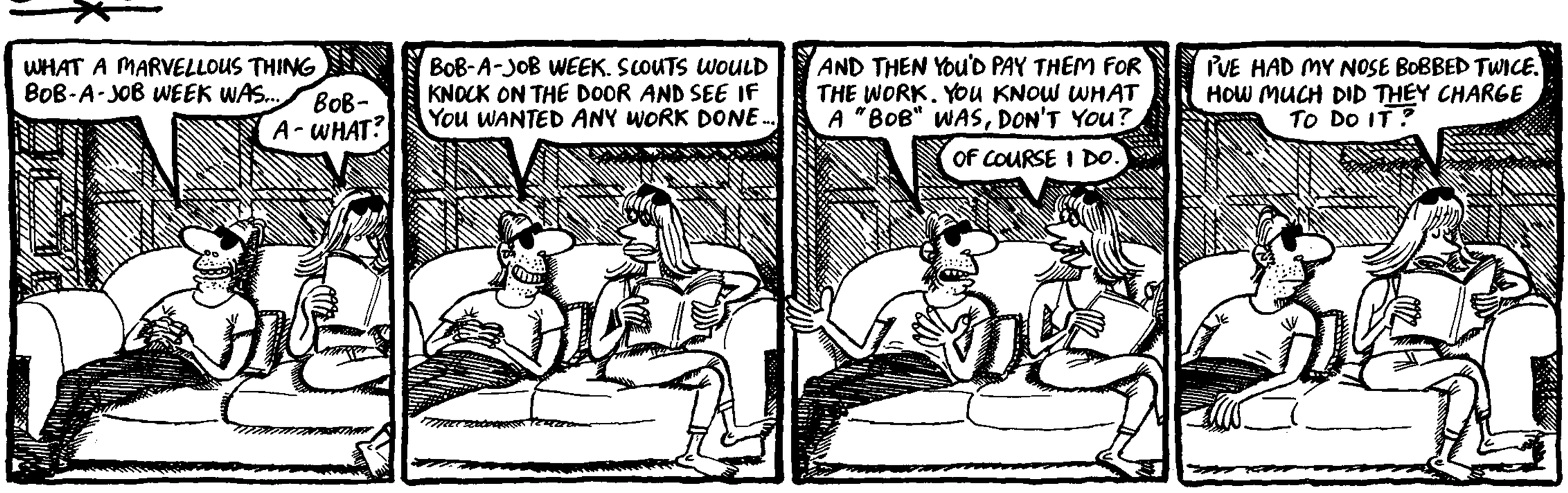
Umbrellas: Frankly, I've never come across an umbrella that could keep off the rain. There I go, dutifully gripping one in my hand, but for Chrisssake, it simply won't do its job. Annoying little pedants sometimes have the nerve to advise me that if I want to keep the rain off I'd be a whole lot better off unrolling it and then making the top spring out but what I say is: why the hell?

Vermeer, Jan: Was there ever a more tedious painter than Jan Vermeer? Had he never seen a horse or a nude woman or even a halfway-decent beach of some sort? And if he had, why the hell didn't he put some of them into his sloppy, oh-so-boring daubs? The guy can't paint! What a creep! Get a life, Jan!

Water, Walking on: Can't everyone?

XYZ: I'm utterly sick to death of this alphabet. Whose crap idea was it in the first place, for Chrissake?

As told to
CRAIG BROWN


WHAT A MARVELLOUS THING BOB-A-JOB WEEK WAS...
BOB-A-WHAT?
BOB-A-JOB WEEK. SCOUTS WOULD KNOCK ON THE DOOR AND SEE IF YOU WANTED ANY WORK DONE...
AND THEN YOU'D PAY THEM FOR THE WORK. YOU KNOW WHAT A "BOB" WAS, DON'T YOU?
OF COURSE I DO.
I'VE HAD MY NOSE BOBBED TWICE. HOW MUCH DID THEY CHARGE TO DO IT?

Literary Review

Immaterial girl

Life With My Sister Madonna

Christopher Ciccone (with Wendy Leigh)

(Simon & Schuster, £17.99)

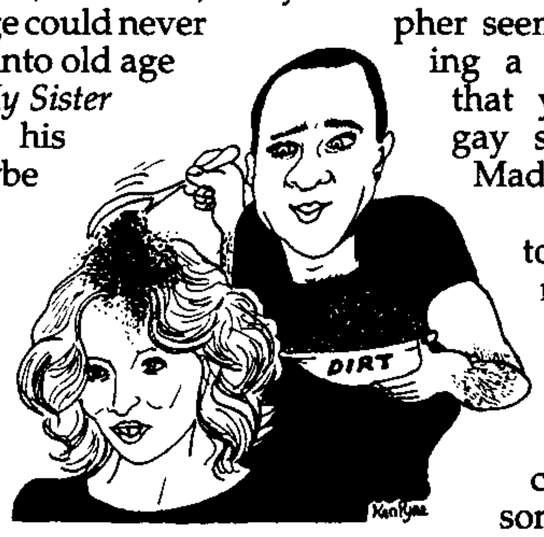
PITY the celebrity sibling. Life is always tougher when you aren't quite as good-looking, driven, talented or interesting as your brother or sister. But at least there may be unexpected career opportunities. Madonna needed Christopher, 27 months younger, to design her stage shows and make sure her dressing room was always painted white. And he was always there for her when she called.

Unfortunately, he may not be there for her much now. The celebrity sibling memoir is a genre that rarely improves relations between relations, although their lawyers usually do well. Madonna being, to all intents and purposes, a lunatic, her continued patronage could never have been guaranteed into old age anyway, so *Life With My Sister Madonna* was clearly his insurance policy, maybe even his pension.

Not that we should disregard the therapeutic elements of writing, or rather dictating, a book like this. "I had originally hoped that this book would be a way for me to define myself and separate from my sister at last. Instead, it has been a catharsis." He accepts that one aspect of his life will never change: "I was born my mother's son, but I will die my sister's brother." For this, it rapidly becomes clear, he blames her rather than himself.

And so we learn, not necessarily for the first time, of Madonna's many oddities. "Schedule... is my sister's middle name. Up at nine in the morning, in bed by eleven at night, with every hour in between planned by her as rigidly as any military campaign." Stalin could have taken her correspondence course. The only thing she can't control is her nights: she's a long-term insomniac. "Unbridled desire for fame and fortune... is incompatible with sleep." Her dresser must remain silent, until asked "How do I look?", "to which he is duty-bound to always respond 'Wonderful, Madonna, wonderful'." Woe betide him if he forgets to hand her the riding crop she needs for the first song. "Before she takes her place onstage, out of habit I hold out my palm and she spits her Ricola cough drop straight into it." Out of habit? After the show she hangs out with "her team, the dancers and musicians... whom she concedes are partly responsible for her success". Miaow. Indeed, almost every chapter in the book could feasibly be titled "Ooh, Get Her!"

Yes, it's all her fault. Back in Michigan as adolescents, Madonna introduced Christopher to the joys of ballet and took him to his first gay bar, full of muscly men. Soon afterwards he realised he was gay. Geneticists and psychologists have been arguing for generations whether homosexuality is caused by nature or nurture, but Christopher seems to be suggesting a third possibility: that you can become gay simply by Being Madonna's Brother.



When he comes to New York and meets Danny, a corduroy salesman in Fiorucci's, "she isn't the least bit curious... my personal life is of little interest to her". She is constantly letting him down, promising but not delivering, hiring him then sacking him. Still, she asks him to come and live with her and Sean Penn when they fall in love, which must have been fun. Sean Penn "is not into home interiors and wants you to know it". He has a firm manly handshake, while Guy Ritchie's is "a trifle unsure".

There are a few such interesting observations, but you have to search hard for them among the endless bitchery and sniping. Not to mention self-pity. Christopher gives Sean and Madge a wedding present. "They both say they like it, but end up not displaying it in their home. Later that year, I will retrieve it from its dark closet and take it back to my apartment." Poor, poor Christopher. Bad, horrible, nasty Madonna.

Reading this book, though, is a little like yanking out every hair on your head, one by one. It tells us almost nothing about Madonna we hadn't already worked out for ourselves, and far more about Christopher than anyone would want to know. He should have resisted the temptation. Silence is golden, if obviously a lot less lucrative.

Stunts your growth

The Fame Formula – How Hollywood's Fixers, Fakers and Star Makers Shaped the Publicity Industry

Mark Borkowski

(Sidgwick & Jackson, £16.99)

I FELL in to publicity because I failed to get in to university to read history," is not an encouraging first-paragraph admission from the author of a history, even one of the publicity industry.

Mark Borkowski, a PR man presumably stung by a middle-aged crisis of conscience, sets off in search of a history of his chosen profession but makes the classic mistake of dreaming up the thesis – "A history of all the crazy stunts pulled off by the variegated characters who have gone to make PR the wonderful world it is today" – only to find that the facts don't fit. The "stunts" are forgettable, workaday wheezes; most of the "characters" are markedly unpleasant and the threads that bind them together are non-existent. As a result, he is forced to do what any good publicist would – dress it up.

Borkowski sets up a romanticised roll-call of cheeky chancers beginning with PT Barnum and flowing inexorably down through a group of hucksters with silly names who fed off the evolving Hollywood entertainment machine. It suits Borkowski to imagine that their persistent log-rolling, pay-offs and pranks were art, because that sets his own existence in a fairer light. "I soon realised," he says in the preface, "that I was like these people – maybe not as great or grand because the media had changed so much... but I was a stuntster through and through. I shared a connection to the circus, was a ballyhoo aficionado and a showman. I had developed a career along the lines of the original publicists without ever knowing there was a legacy or tradition there."

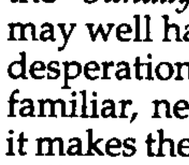
If that's what he wants to believe, fine. But what comes out of his study of a century of "flacks" is that PR, as you might suspect, is a squalid little business. From the studio system in the 30s, through the TV age and on to today's rapacious control culture, it is generally unclear what Borkowski's putative heroes have actually done to earn his veneration. They lied to journalists, they paid for lunches, they put wild animals in strange places (a remarkably popular strategy among the truly great publicists, it turns out).

Beyond this, however, almost all of the PR heroes ruined lives for personal gain. Tragic deaths were spun in to "suicides" to "protect" pampered stars. Drugs were peddled to teenagers to insure compliance. In Borkowski's mind these people are legends, cultural bellwethers, men who mattered.

Others of course might consider them better forgotten: the cumulative contribution of a century of PR is a culture where the press has been emasculated by years of coddling and double-speak; a culture where the most powerful PR in the world is a Hollywood publicist known as "Dr No", who makes millions by advising her clients not to speak at all; a culture where the only real losers are the witless punters buying the papers without knowing that they are on the receiving end of one giant sausage machine.

Borkowski set out to write a history but found that actually, much as you would expect, PR is a pretty empty vessel. So in his closing chapter he tacks on a specious "formula" – F(T)=B+P etc – for calculating how long any individual's fame will last. It has nothing to do with the rest of the "history", but this retrofitted headline-grabber winds up as the book's title, and suddenly we've been duped in to just another sell.

This tacky ploy merely confirms that publicity is not an art and doesn't really have a story – it's just well-paid parasites pissing in a pot that's already full of piss. In a roundly depressing coda, the *Guardian*'s pre-publication extract from the book consisted only of the final chapter, showing that the hacks and the flacks are all in this together.

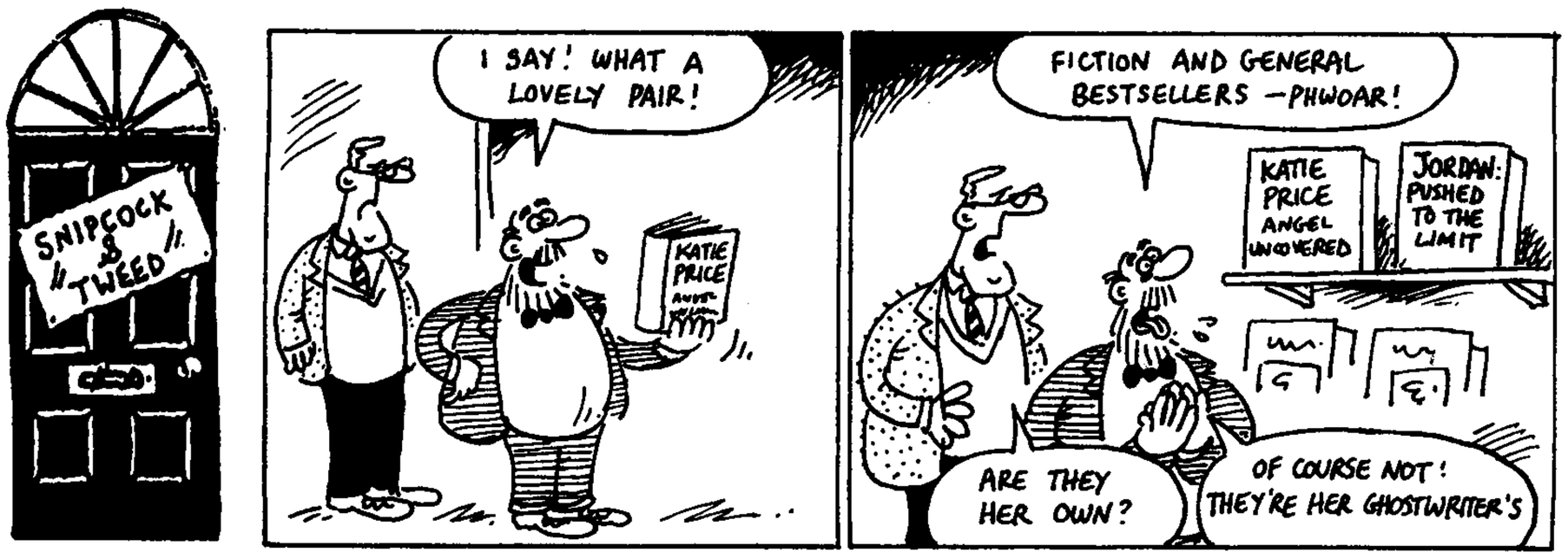


Books & Bookmen

■ LOTS of countries are represented on the Booker longlist – judges' chairman Michael Portillo enthused about the presence of "writers from Pakistan, India, Australia, Ireland and the UK" – but big names are distinctly lacking.

Bookies were forced to settle for Joseph O'Neill, a Manhattan-based Irishman whose *Netherland* was loved by Manhattan critics but received more sceptically elsewhere, as the likeliest challenger for Salman Rushdie.

Rushdie's *The Enchantress of Florence* ("by a long chalk, the worst thing he has ever written", judged the *Sunday Times*'s Peter Kemp) may well have been included out of desperation to have at least one familiar, newsworthy name, and if it makes the shortlist the final stages will assume the standard noughties


SNIPCOCK & TWEED
I SAY! WHAT A LOVELY PAIR!
KATIE PRICE
FICTION AND GENERAL BESTSELLERS – PHWOAR!
KATIE PRICE ANGEL UNCOVERED
JORDAN: PUSHED TO THE LIMIT
ARE THEY HER OWN?
OF COURSE NOT! THEY'RE HER GHOSTWRITER'S

shape – a lone author of established stature, often represented by a weak book, takes on five unknowns.

Last year an Ian McEwan novella alone offered feeble star lustre; and since he lost to Peter Carey in 2001, only the 2005 (Banville, Barnes, Ishiguro and Zadie Smith) and 2006 (all unknowns) shortlists have deviated from the pattern.

Is this the result of judges' spite? Or their over-eager search for novelty? Or rather is it that they feel that year after year feted, highly rewarded writers don't deliver? This time, in the view of Portillo's panel, those who fall short apparently include Carey, Nadeem Aslam, Zoe Heller, Hanif Kureishi, Howard Jacobson, James Kelman, *David Lodge*, *Adam* Mars Jones, *Ali Smith* and Tim Winton. Publishers must be asking themselves why do their most cherished authors seem to keep failing?

■ IT'S a sad fact, meanwhile, that of Granta's 20 best young British novelists in 2003, for which 2008 Booker judge Alex Clark was a selector, only one (Philip Hensher) has produced a novel longlisted this year. And rather like our plucky wild-card entries at Wimbledon, the latest batch of untried British authors is not showing much sign of improving on their underperforming predecessors.

Portillo, Clark et al overlooked much-touted homegrown lit-fic newcomers such as Sadie Jones in picking a decidedly odd group of five Brits, including Rushdie, the 81-year-old John Berger and (the sole debutant) thriller writer Tom Rob Smith. All that links them is an apparent aversion to setting fiction in 21st-century UK: Hensher and Linda Grant's novels are set in the 70s; Smith opts for 50s Russia; Berger for a composite Third World country; Rushdie for 16th-century India and Italy. Again, publishers might ponder this preference for history – some of the foreign novelists who could well make the shortlist, such as India's Aravind Adiga and Australia's Michelle de Kretser, are clearly energised by writing about their own countries, and by present-day or near-present settings.

■ THE longlist elicited an online hissy-fit from the Hon Jamie Byng, flamboyant boss of Canongate, who raged that he could not "respect a judging committee" which failed to pick Canongate's entry by Helen Garner ("a modern classic") and then rubbed in salt by including a humdrum thriller.

Garner's novel, The Spare Room, certainly has its admirers. But could there be another factor in Byng's blast? In May, judges' chairman Portillo wrote scornfully about the "hyperbole" of publishers' supporting letters ("for example, pleas written in fairly extravagant language extolling the virtues of five or six novels, all written by the same senior editor"), and such pleas are known to be a Byng speciality.

It's not impossible that there was an element of guilt in his outburst, tacitly admitting that enthusing indiscriminately may have harmed the chances of the book with most prize potential.

■ FEW surprises in the reading list of David Cameron-approved tomes issued to Conservative MPs for the summer break, which featured such titles as Richard H Thaler and Cass R Sunstein's *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth and Happiness*, which Dave likes so much he devoted an entire speech to plugging it last month.

His colleague Boris Johnson may be less keen on the inclusion of his own biography, a project he was at one point so keen to kill off that he offered author Andrew Gimson £100,000 not to write it. Shadow foreign secretary William Hague, however, can only be delighted at the endorsement of his wife Ffion's *The Pain and the Privilege: the Women in Lloyd George's Life*, presumably intended as a guide for MPs on how to keep their mistresses ignorant of one another.

As the *Eye* noted in its Worstsellers list (*Eye* 1213), the book failed to make much of an impression in shops on its release in June – and with hubby having to give up his *News of the World* column and promise to scale back his lucrative after-dinner speeches as a condition of rejoining the shadow cabinet, the couple need all the help they can get.

■ MORE on the Texan Brewer brothers who presided over the disastrous demise of the SPCK chain of Christian bookstores.

The St Stephen the Great Charitable Trust (SSG) claims not to have the money to pay their former employees (see *Eye* 1214), but appeared to have somehow scraped together the pennies to pay lawyers to silence cartoonist Dave Walker who had written about the affair on his blog.

After receiving a cease and desist letter threatening legal action for libel, Walker removed all his informative posts about the unhappy experiences of former SPCK employees. His blog briefly read: "Although I believe I have not done anything wrong I do not have the money to face a legal battle. The removal of these posts is in no way an admission of guilt. To say I am not happy about the decision I have been forced to take here is an understatement."

That post too has now been removed. But the saga has been taken up by other bloggers who have been checking out the US bankruptcy filings, which may explain why SSG can afford to pay the lawyers. The "disclosure of compensation of attorney for debtor" shows that for legal services rendered in connection with the bankruptcy case, SSG is to pay $75,000 to lawyer J. Mark Brewer, who also happens to be… chairman and CEO of SSG!

PS: As the *Eye* went to press, a number of other bloggers had received C&D letters from J. Mark Brewer, including Rev Sam Norton of West Mersea. Brewer's correspondence now makes the bizarre claim that "Neither English nor American law permits you to engage in what you term 'fair comment' with respect to a private company, nor with respect to a private individual – namely, me."

'Bookworm'

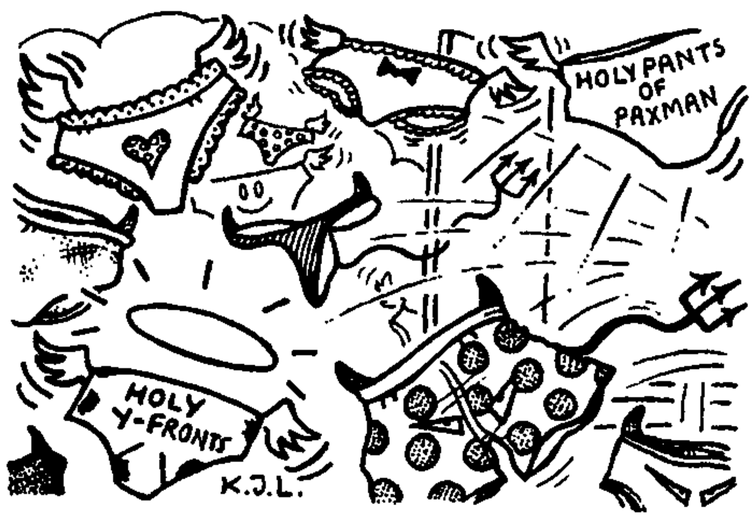
FIRST DRAFTS

Harrison Birtwistle

LAST WORD

"I am a great devotee of Dorothy's writing but I don't think it's appropriate for me to offer a quote for this particular book, since I am a declared Christian – and happy."

– Historic if baffling renunciation by Fay Weldon, onetime queen of promiscuous puffing, in publicity material for Dorothy Rowe's *What Should I Believe?*



Knickers are a window to the soul. They tell the world how we wish to be perceived and who we really are – good or evil.

TANYA GOLD
Guardian

***Fuck Forever* is as British an anthem as anything the Proms has brought to the Albert Hall and [Pete] Doherty's finest moment.**

BETTY CLARKE
Guardian

Had Shakespeare or Joyce or Dickens or Puccini been sitting in Cineworld with me watching Mama Mia! they would have nodded thunderously with approval and left the cinema muttering 'I want a piece of that'. Had Ibsen been there, he would have been up on his seat applauding [Meryl] Streep for empowering middle-aged women.

MELANIE REID
The Times

I discovered quite a few peeing poems, written by men, and this made me think about the difference between male and female peeing; how one can be seen as celebratory because of its amazing golden arc, and the other not. There's an analogy there for me with women writers and the male tradition because perhaps what women do has differences which have not been valued.

JO SHAPCOTT
Mslexia

When an artist is good they create their own language; it's a language which they can pick up and drop whenever they wish, but it is 100 per cent theirs. This is what I've enjoyed about this installation period. I never realised how much Traceyness I actually make, and I'm very happy to spot and enjoy my influences, too. Munch, Picasso, Schiele, Giotto, Katie Kollwitz, Frida Kahlo and even many other artists where the influence is totally subconscious.

It's fun to see my own little route through art history, but I'm pleased there is still part of a student inside me. There is part of me that will never be satisfied, that will always look and question what I do. I feel good to be my hardest critic. I can see the ups and downs more honestly, more correctly and with more authority than anyone else I know. And that's what keeps me going.

TRACEY EMIN
Independent

Pseuds Corner

Pseuds Corporate

Oval Map™ products are oval-shaped Post-it® notes produced specially for us by 3M. They enhance meetings by giving a better flow to the thoughts that emerge from a group, and stop the problematic 'square alignment' that people build when using normal post-its®.

Banxia software products catalogue

CONTRIBUTORS: Alasdair Dixon, David Harbin, M.G. Sherlock, Pru Heathcote, Arik Yacobi, R. Chadwick.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

PRISON DEATH

Tragic chain of events

IF the test of the civilisation of a country is the way it treats its criminals, as Churchill and others have suggested, the shocking death in Doncaster prison of Stephen Brown suggests the UK is stuck in the dark ages.

Stephen, a 23-year-old heroin addict who was dying of septicaemia and pneumonia, was chained to a prison officer when he suffered a fatal heart attack in Doncaster Royal Infirmary on 19 March 2003.

He had been taken there by prison officers after he had collapsed in the jail's detox wing. A hospital nurse with 20 years' experience said she was shocked by his appalling medical and physical condition. He was dehydrated and suffering from hypothermia; filthy, unkempt and covered in faeces. "He looked like a little old man who was dying – it was obvious he was desperately ill," she said.

Despite requests from doctors and nurses that his restraints be removed – he could barely move so posed no escape threat – prison staff declined until he suffered the heart attack.

Stephen's inhumane treatment in the jail, run by the private operator Serco, was exposed last week by the inquest jury in Doncaster. They had heard that when Stephen entered the jail on 13 March 2003, he had been pleased that he had been given an eight-month sentence for theft because he hoped it might help him break his heroin addiction.

He was immediately placed in the jail's detox unit. But, incredibly, none of the nursing staff there had had any training in drug withdrawal, so when his condition deteriorated rapidly they misdiagnosed his symptoms. Evidence was heard from several prisoners that they had repeatedly told nursing staff that Stephen's

Stephen Brown's grieving parents with a picture of their son

condition was nothing to do with his drug withdrawal. They were concerned that he slept constantly, could barely get out of bed and was in a lot of pain. Normally withdrawing addicts talk about "rattling", being fidgety and unable to sleep.

Three days after his admission, a prison officer also voiced his concerns to nursing staff about Stephen's deteriorating health. But the jury heard that no one carried out even basic medical assessments, such as taking his blood pressure, temperature or pulse.

On 19 March he was found at 9am collapsed in a toilet. Even then he did not see a doctor for an hour and a half. His blood pressure was so low that the doctor could not get a reading, and he was abnormally cold and clinically dehydrated. He again collapsed and an emergency ambulance was called. Handcuffed throughout, he died at 9.30 that night.

Because streptococcal septicaemia often proves fatal, none of the experts could say that the failure of staff at the jail to recognise or seek emergency treatment for Stephen's symptoms contributed to his death. But as Sian Griffiths, casework manager at INQUEST, which campaigns over deaths in custody, said: "His treatment was degrading and inhumane. The failure by the prison to provide even the most basic nursing care to this critically ill man clearly shocked hospital staff and represents a completely unacceptable failure in the state's duty of care."

The jail said that since "this regrettable incident" it now has an integrated drug treatment service. Little consolation to Stephen's distraught family, who said their son had been left to die in squalor and pain.

IN THE COURTS

Bates bytes back

A SIX-MONTH suspended jail sentence for perjury and making false statements hasn't kept Jim Bates, the high-profile computer "expert", away from highly sensitive forensic work.

The *Eye* has learned that Bates turned up at a police station as a driver and assistant to a former colleague, Chris Magee, who now runs Cyber Forensics and who was examining computer evidence for the defence.

The *Eye* revealed in 2005 that Bates, now 67, had invented his qualifications to mislead clients and the courts. In March this year he was fined £1,000 and sentenced to six months, suspended for two years, for one charge of perjury and three of making false statements.

Judge Simon Hammond said he was taking into account Bates's age, his previous good character, the "invaluable" work he had done in the past to help the police – and the fact that he could no longer work as an expert.

Asked if he thought it appropriate that he should be working on sensitive cases and have access to evidence while serving out his sentence, Bates said: "I think it entirely appropriate as I am just earning a living and there is nothing I am aware of that prevents me doing that. If someone wants to pay me for their expertise, then that is a matter for them."

Bates was, of course, the defence expert called in by Brian Stevens, the Soham murder detective cleared of child pornography offences. Stevens was later jailed for perjury for concocting a false alibi in the case. And *Eye* readers will know that his "expert" evidence was used by Scotland Yard to bring trumped up charges against the then police sergeant Gurpal Virdi of sending race hate mail to fellow ethnic minority officers.

He told the *Eye*: "Please do not call me again. I do not want to speak to people I do not consider honest." Bit ripe coming from a perjurer!

Crass Cafcass

CHILDREN are being left at risk of domestic violence because of delays, inadequate and inconsistent risk assessment and poor court reports, a damning inspection into the work of Cafcass, the children's court service, in South Yorkshire has revealed.

Inspectors found that while public law cases usually involving care proceedings were dealt with more speedily and effectively, it was in private family breakdown and divorce cases that serious risks arose. The work of one Cafcass practitioner was found to be so flawed that inspectors referred it immediately for a review by senior managers.

South Yorkshire is not an isolated case; Ofsted findings in the East Midlands and the South East have been no better. Delays and poor service (*Eyes passim* ad nauseam) have been constant features in private divorce cases ever since Cafcass was rushed into existence seven years ago.

ECO-TOWNS

Fact or friction?

MORE on Weston Otmoor in Oxfordshire, where developer Parkridge says it wants to build a 15,000-home eco-town (Rotten Boroughs, *Eye* 1214).

Otmoor was the setting for Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, its "chequerboard" landscape supposedly the inspiration for the giant chessboard in *Through The Looking Glass*. No wonder Parkridge's plans, particularly for transport, are so fantastical.

Oxfordshire county and Cherwell district councils are scathing, describing the plans as "aspirational in the extreme". Not only are funds said to be "significantly short", but according to a joint council report, promises have been made that "cannot be kept". So far, so bad.

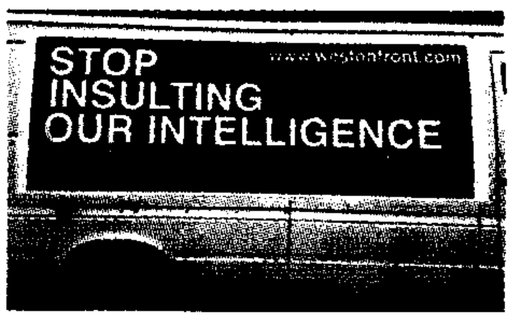
Take the plan to reactivate the Oxford-Milton Keynes railway line to take shiny new double-decker trains. To do so, Oxford and Milton Keynes stations would have to be rebuilt because the platforms are not long enough, and many bridges would have to be raised. In Bicester, the one level crossing would be down for up to half the time, while residents of Weston Otmoor, aka Wotmoor, would be penned in by a toll charge on the one road in and out of town.

Parkridge says that one of the most important buildings in the new town will be the railway station and during the day five trains an hour are promised in both directions, with Oxford reachable in just six minutes and Milton Keynes in 30. London would be an hour away. Yeah, right. Somehow these projected timings are much better than current fastest times.

While Parkridge suggests this new iron railroad will carry up to 5,000 people an hour, critics say the £150m allocated to double track the line is "woefully inadequate". Double that figure might be more accurate. But who will pay the running costs as "Wotmoor" residents have been promised free travel for life? Answer came there none.

Around "Wotmoor" Parkridge promises that trams will deliver residents to their doors and on to Oxford and Bicester. Inside Wotmoor there will be trams every 90 seconds all day and night and four per hour to Oxford using that rebuilt railway. The future fantasy is that trams may go on to Cowley and even Didcot. And all for £25m with no fares collected from residents!

The promise that the 35,000-plus residents will enjoy free public transport to and from Oxford and Bicester and maybe even to London – at a cost, according to Parkridge, of just £5m – also sounds too good to be true because it most likely *is* too good to be true. Credulity is also stretched by the promise of a park and ride at Wotmoor for up to 5,000 residents' cars and 6,000 others. Currently there are spaces for around 5,000 cars in all the Oxford P&Rs put together. Through doubling potential commuter numbers, Parkridge says its P&Rs will somehow "reduce" the strain on the already bust junction nine of the M40 and the A34 to Oxford – a leap of the imagination that would defy even the Rev Dodgson.



Is it possible that Wonderland, sorry Wotmoor, is just some kind of smokescreen? A new "town" near a major motorway junction would be the ideal site for a logistics/HGV hub for the Midlands and South of England? And funnily enough the majority shareholder in Parkridge is ProLogis – a US freight company and the "the world's largest owner, manager and developer of distribution facilities". Using Wotmoor "eco town" as a Trojan horse to build a giant warehouse and lorry park is one idea that doesn't sound completely fantastical…

HEATHROW ARREST

Just plane stupid

NEXT month Ayodeji Omotade is to appear before Uxbridge magistrates charged with threatening, abusive, insulting and disorderly conduct on a British Airways flight out of Heathrow last April. But Mr Omotade, a London-based IT consultant, is far from being a drunken, rowdy passenger as the charge might suggest.

In fact Mr Omotade is a gentle, polite, self-effacing 39-year-old father whose "offence" was to ask what was causing a fellow passenger to make an "agonising" noise while struggling in neighbouring seats on a flight that was about to depart Terminal 4 for Nigeria.

Mr Omotade did what any nervous passenger concerned about a disturbance on a tightly packed airliner might have done. "I could not see the person who was making the noise, but there were four or five police officers, two cabin crew and three plain-clothes guys around," he told the *Eye*. "It was a dreadful noise and people around were getting upset. It must have gone on for about 20 minutes, but it was only after he started calling out in pidgin English: 'I will die, I will die', that I felt I had to say something. I told them, the man said they were killing him and I asked them to stop." According to Mr Omotade, others voiced concerns too.

The man in question was an asylum seeker who belonged to a banned protest group in Nigeria. He was being restrained and forcibly removed from the country. A steward told Mr Omotade that the man was "faking it" and the officers were merely doing their job. However, after an explanation from the captain over the intercom, the deportee, in chains and handcuffs and in some distress, was removed from the flight.

Passengers returned to their seats expecting the flight to take off. But then the steward returned with police, pointed out Mr Omotade and said he was the one who had orchestrated a protest. Mr Omotade told officers he hadn't organised anything – he was a fare-paying passenger who just wanted to get to Nigeria to attend his brother's wedding. But his protest was ignored. He was handcuffed, humiliated and hauled away. "I burst into tears," he said. "It was pure frustration and disbelief. It seemed that nothing I said or did would make a difference."

Since then Mr Omotade has been treated as a criminal. Even though he had declared the total of £1,600 he was carrying to Revenue and Customs ahead of departure, police officers decided the money was the "proceeds of crime" and confiscated it. After eight hours in custody, he was released late at night, with no money and no possessions, accused of "affray, unlawful violence and public disorder". It took a week to get his luggage back and two months before his money was returned after police checked his bank accounts and work records.

"I have been working in the corporate world for many years," Mr Omotade told the *Eye*. "I know how to behave. I was not violent, I did not swear and I was not abusive. I wasn't there as someone who was looking out for human rights; I was there because I had paid for my ticket to Lagos and I expected to have a safe, peaceful flight." His removal triggered further protests from angry passengers. In the end, all economy-class passengers were removed and the flight left with only the hapless deportee and first-class passengers on board.

At a brief court hearing last month, the affray and public order offences had been reduced to the lesser charges by the crown prosecution service, which seems to be relying on the statements of only one steward and one police officer.

The CPS might have done better to insist that police take statements from other passengers such as Akin Sayerrs, a 44-year-old senior manager whose account of events on flight 075 is consistent with Mr Omotade's. In fact he says it was *after* Mr Omotade was removed from the flight that other passengers, in protest at his treatment, became abusive and verbally threatening.

Mr Sayerrs told the *Eye* he didn't know Mr Omotade and had no reason to speak out in support of him, other than to make sure the truth came out. "At no time did he threaten or assault or incite anyone to do anything. All he did was ask for this very uncomfortable situation to be resolved. He protested because he was nearest the noise. Others then jumped on the bandwagon."

BA declined to comment, other than to say that it was obliged to carry out enforced deportations, under schedule 3 of the Immigration Act 1971. Er, not quite. Pilots are entitled not to fly deportees in a state of distress, and there have been many cases where they have chosen not to do so. Mr Omotade is now appealing for other passengers – or indeed crew – to come forward as witnesses. A criminal record would jeopardise his career, but he says: "I did what was right and what any decent human hearing that agonising sound from someone would do. I have no regrets about that."

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

CDC's seeds of change?

***PRIVATE Eye's* reports on investments by publicly-owned international development fund CDC, formerly the Commonwealth Development Corporation, in shopping malls and beauty products at the expense of projects helping the world's poor seem finally to have made an impression at the department for international development (DfID).**

MPs on parliament's international development committee last month questioned DfID permanent secretary Minouche Shafik, who arrived from the World Bank in March, on an approach that has brought huge profits and multi-million pound pay packets for those running CDC and its privatised fund management arm Actis but a desertion of investment in agriculture – just at the wrong time. "Agribusiness" now represents less than 5 percent of the CDC's African investments compared to 23 percent ten years ago and double that 20 years ago.

Shafik told the MPs that "we have just had a whole series of discussions with [CDC] over the last few weeks because we want to tighten the investment policy even further to press them to go into even more frontier and difficult markets because we think they have done a pretty good job". But the prospect of being told to target potentially less lucrative investments clearly hasn't gone down well with CDC and Actis's profit-motivated bosses. Shafik remarked that, "interaction on that investment policy has been – what is the polite term – we have had a vigorous and frank exchange, would be a fair way of describing the conversations that we have had with both the chairman and the chief executive". A spokesman confirmed to the *Eye* that "in due course there will be an announcement about the investment policy".

DfID remains keen to talk up what little agricultural investment CDC does still have, using such a business as the only case study in its recent annual report. "CDC has invested $75 million with Tanzanian Tea Packers," it boasted. DfID director Mark Lowcock impressed on MPs the value of the investment not just economically but as support to local schools and clinics – one reason grassroots projects are generally a better target for funds than shopping malls for the middle classes. But $75m, oddly, is more than CDC's accounts show as invested in the whole of African agribusiness. In fact, CDC confirmed to the *Eye* that its investment in the company is worth only, er, $5m.

The government might eventually be starting to talk a decent game on its development funds, but it remains a long way from playing it.

VIRGIN GALACTIC

To Beardie and beyond

THE Silly Season began in earnest last week when Sir Richard "Beardie" Branson summoned hacks to the Mojave desert to hear his plans to send tourists into space via Virgin Galactic. "Space is the final frontier that is so essential to the future of civilisation on this planet," he declared.

Essential to the future of civilisation? This seems a rather extravagant way of describing a service that will fly a few squillionaires up to an altitude of 70 miles so they can experience five minutes of weightlessness before returning to earth, at £100,000 a ticket. As so often with Beardie, hype seems to be galloping far ahead of reality.

There was a similar gush of publicity four years ago when he first announced the Virgin Galactic scheme. "Virgin tycoon Sir Richard Branson was 'over the moon' yesterday as he unveiled plans for the first commercial flights to the stars," the *Daily Express* raved in September 2004. "Dream flights aboard his 'space liners' will become reality for millions of people within three years, he pledged." In other words, they would be fully operational by the summer of 2007.

In July 2006 he adjusted the timetable slightly, saying he'd be running space trips "by early 2008". But the slippage was cunningly concealed in yet another torrent of hype as he revealed his scheme to build "a hotel on the Moon" and "stage activities like the Moon Olympics".

Most imaginative. But what about those Virgin Galactic jaunts? In February 2007 he told Cath Urquhart of the *Times* that the space flights would start "within two years", ie by early 2009. Once again, however, he eclipsed the admission of further delays by simultaneously revealing "dramatic plans for a space hotel" and a "*Star Trek*-style" space exploration project. "The entrepreneur told of his hopes to launch a solar-powered craft travelling deep into space – with passengers buying a one-way ticket," Urquhart gushed.

Last week, however, Beardie quietly pushed the date back yet further, saying the first galactic tourists would leave in "about 18 months".

No matter: the Mojave desert press trip achieved its purpose. In the updated edition of his Branson biography, published next week, Tom Bower notes that Beardie's first unveiling of Virgin Galactic four years ago "intentionally coincided with the inauguration of Virgin Trains' new 125mph tilting trains connecting Scotland and London" – just as last week's space hype coincided with the announcement of his plans to set up a chain of polyclincs with his daughter Holly.

Better still, these publicity stunts distract attention from the fact that Beardie is actually in a spot of bother. His bid for Northern Rock was rebuffed, he has lost at least $200m on his phone business Virgin Mobile US since its flotation last year and the travel trade is being battered by the recession and soaring oil prices.

Shares in his Australian carrier Virgin Blue have plunged to a record low after it admitted that profits would be cut by more than half this year. Virgin Atlantic has yet to publish its results for 2007-8, but its profit in the year ending February 2007 was a mere £6.6m – and that at a time before credit crunches and fuel-price hikes took their toll.

Luckily for Beardie, British hacks are so busy gazing in awe at his "final frontier" that they scarcely ever glance at his bottom line.

In the Back continues overleaf ➤

JUNKETS

Bacon and EDS

WHEN the department for work and pensions (DWP) announced a new £2.5bn deal with IT supplier EDS three years ago, both sides were keen to promote the arrangement as a "partnership". Now the *Eye* can reveal how close is the relationship under which EDS has received £600m in each of the last couple of years.

In 2006, a freedom of information request reveals, DWP permanent secretary Leigh Lewis was taken to dinner twice by EDS while the firm wined and dined his IT director, Joe Harley, no fewer than seven times. Coincidentally, by this stage the DWP was already paying EDS significantly more than anticipated under the 2005 deal "to meet higher demands".

Separately, at the end of 2006 DWP announced that, though EDS's involvement with the Child Support Agency had been disastrous and the agency would be scrapped, EDS would still be given more work designing IT for the new set up – this, despite a leaked internal EDS email having once laid much of the blame for the CSA fiasco at the door of its own "badly designed, badly developed, badly tested, badly implemented" systems.

So where did EDS and the mandarins hold their lucrative discussions? Lewis and Harley were both treated at the swanky No.5 Cavendish Square restaurant; Harley was taken to Tower 42, Pappagallo, Mon Plaisir and Bertorelli's. Then there was dinner for the hungry pair at the home of EDS's president, Ron Rittenmeyer. This was more than a bus ride away as Rittenmeyer lives in Plano, Texas, and the dinner was during a two-day trip to "discuss the cost and efficiency challenges facing the Department over the Spending Review 2007 period, and how EDS could help to meet them".

Nor was that the limit of the transatlantic jaunts. Harley had a couple of days at EDS's expense in San Francisco for the company's annual "client council conference" at the Mandarin Oriental.

That EDS should schmooze the officials who write its cheques is no surprise. Despite its repeated foul-ups on public contracts, the firm survives on the largesse of British taxpayers (its profits from this work outstrip its worldwide profits). That's more than worth the price of a few junkets.

Summer pudding

THE DWP's other main job in 2006 was to re-write government pension policy. The centrepiece of the white papers it produced in May and July was the introduction of "personal pension accounts" into which employees will be automatically enrolled, often against their interests.

The notoriously mis-selling private pension industry didn't want to be left out, and much whinging from various vested interests eventually secured them a key role in the scheme. Disclosure of DWP bosses' junkets now shows, however, that some of the lobbying was less than open.

As the policy was being drawn up, DWP boss Leigh Lewis and pensions strategy director Phil Wynn Owen were being entertained by the Association of British Insurers at 51 Gresham St and the Riverbank Park Plaza. Wynn Owen could also be found troughing at the Savoy, once courtesy of Legal and General and again as guest of the Society of Pensions Consultants, at Olorosso in Edinburgh with Scottish Financial Enterprise and with Rothschild at its New Court HQ in St Swithin's Lane. Funnily enough the very same firms can look forward to a bright future thanks to government pensions policy announced soon afterwards.

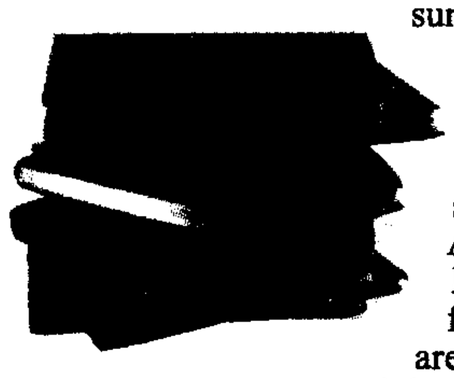
SCHOOLS REPORT

Plots of money

THE £35bn Building Schools for the Future PFI programme is already years behind schedule – at best only 10 percent of the new schools that were supposed to open by this year actually will – and it has just been heavily criticised by the government's architectural watchdog, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment.

So why are the Treasury and officials at the agencies responsible, Partnerships for Schools, still so keen on these incomprehensible joint ventures between local authorities, private companies and an outfit called Building Schools for the Future Investments LLP, itself a partnership between the department for children, schools and families and the privatised Treasury PFI taskforce, Partnerships UK?

One reason emerged in a parliamentary answer last month from schools minister Jim Knight. He admitted that his department recommends local authorities set aside 3 percent of the costs for spending on consultants, while central funding allows for fees on new projects, including architecture and design, of 12.5 percent. On £35bn, that's more than £5bn in fees, including £1bn-plus for management consultants alone.



As pointed out in *Eye* 1208, the man at the Treasury who has been keen to promote the BSF programme, is head of the private finance unit Gordon McKechnie. Before moving to Whitehall, he happens to have had a large hand in developing the PFI advisory practice of Deloitte, one of whose recent successes was to be named on a panel of approved consultants for the £1bn on offer from the BSF programme!

The much-delayed programme is already under review by the National Audit Office, but don't expect the NAO to say anything too hard-hitting. The auditors have enlisted the help of a KPMG consultant to "facilitate focus group sessions" on the subject. KPMG, it so happens, was also named two months ago as one of the approved financial advisers in line for a share of the consultants' billions.

NUMBER CRUNCHING

54 days Period by which Ed Balls has put back deadline for all 11-year-olds to know their SATs results

0 days Period by which Ed Balls has put back deadline for publication of league tables for 11-year-olds, supposedly based on those results

Ealing comedy

JUST HOW effective the private finance initiative can be in delivering first-rate new school buildings can be seen in Ealing, west London.

Exposed wiring, badly-sealed windows, broken lifts and doors, classrooms that are freezing cold in winter and baking hot in summer all feature at the brand new Acton High School.

One year after opening, serious safety hazards at the £22m PFI school have still not been fixed by MITIE Group, which has the contract for "facilities management" at the site. Exposed wires in a science lab and a hand dryer mounted too close to a worktop so it is constantly activated, were just two of the snagging issues raised in May last year that have yet to be dealt with. In the meantime, plenty of other things have gone wrong, but staff say they get no answers from MITIE to their requests for repairs, let alone any idea of how long it might be before the work is done.

What hope for local pupils when Ealing puts all its school buildings into private hands under the Building Schools for the Future scheme?

First-class chumps

THE rush to build academy schools continues (see *Eye* 1214) with shenanigans aplenty as councils and private sector sponsors are apparently prepared to do anything to push their plans through.

● Residents in **Hull** are alarmed by plans for an academy, sponsored by Hull University, to be built on the Princess Elizabeth Playing Fields. Not only would they lose the green space and sports facilities, but during last summer's devastating floods, the fields were completely under water. People nearby believe their homes were only saved because the playing fields soaked up so much water. Astonishingly, the move comes as Hull is bidding for £790,000 funding to create "aqua-greens" – areas of green field to act as a water sink and protect houses during flooding.

● With local opinion strongly in favour of continuing single-sex education, **Manchester** city council came up with plans to replace both North Manchester High School for Boys and the North Manchester High School for Girls with individual "media" academies, sponsored by ITV Granada and Microsoft.

However, after consultation uncovered objections to the siting of two 900-place new academies, squished on to the current boys' school site, education bosses have come up with a bizarre wheeze. "Both academies will be housed in a single new building," reveals the latest report to councillors – an interesting approach to single-sex schooling. The schools will now only have 750 places each, leaving the future uncertain for many of the current pupils and staff.

● The Haberdashers Aske's Knights Academy in **Lewisham** found itself under threat of closure – just two days after its official opening. It was identified as one of the 638 schools being given a three-year deadline by schools secretary Ed Balls to get 30 percent of pupils achieving five or more good GCSEs or face being closed and re-opened as, er, an academy. The announcement was obvious nonsense, but being pointlessly rebuilt would be a familiar experience for the former Malory School.

Ten years ago a sports hall was built at Malory, courtesy of taxpayers' money and a £725,000 lottery grant. With the school being replaced as an academy, the nearly-new sports hall was knocked down and then rebuilt exactly the same size. Had the hall not been knocked down and rebuilt, the Knights Academy would have been treated for tax purposes as a refurbishment rather than new build, thereby having to pay VAT of £4m.

NUMBER CRUNCHING

4 Number of different qualifications government aspires to have for 14-19 year olds to avoid confusion for employers

8 Number there will be from September, when government launches diplomas along with overhaul of school curriculum

In the City

It's not just cricket

UNTIL the recent honeymoon murders, the Caribbean island of Antigua was best known either for cricketer Viv Richards, failed offshore banks, hosting internet gambling or its unenviable reputation for political corruption.

The banking business has been cleaned up since the 1990s; and although gambling is still controversial, political corruption has been reduced following the end of more than two decades of Bird family rule in 2004. But there are still critics of the way the small former British colony is run.

In its most recent report on corruption, the US state department found there had been considerable improvements by the present government but that "there were isolated reports of government corruption during the year". However, on money laundering it was much more critical.

"Illicit proceeds from the trans-shipment of narcotics are laundered in Antigua and Barbuda... [which] has yet to prosecute a money laundering case and there are few arrests or prosecutions." The department admitted that the government "has frozen, on its own initiative, over US$90m believed to be connected to money laundering cases still pending in the United States and other countries".

So it is surprising to find Antigua is still home to a little known but fast-growing private wealth management and investment banking group which claims more than $50bn under management and more than $7bn in deposits. Little known, that is, until June when its sole owner, Texan-born banker Sir Allen Stanford, was beamed down on to the sacred green of Lord's, home of the MCC, with a Perspex container filled with $20m to announce his plans for "20/20" cricket.

Sir Allen – he has dual nationality and was awarded the knighthood by the Antiguan government in 2006 (he is the biggest local investor) – has launched a series of annual $20m "winner take all" matches between England and a West Indian XI to be played at the Stanford Oval in Antigua, starting this November.

The extent of Stanford's largesse captured the attention of the English cricket authorities. But little attention seems to have been paid to the colourful history of cricket's latest and most bountiful benefactor.

R. Allen Stanford, 58, claims to be related to the rich founder of Stanford University in California, *and in 2001 he* donated $2.5m for the restoration of the Leland Stanford mansion in Sacramento. Stanford said his great-great-great grandfather Thomas was "closely related" to Leland Stanford's father, Joseph. However, archivists at the university have cast doubt on any link. Especially as it was claimed his family originally came from Switzerland: Leland Stanford's origins were in England.

Allen Stanford, who was born in Texas where his grandfather started an insurance business in the 1930s, made his first fortune building homes in Houston. But he was little known even there before he began making banking waves in the Caribbean in the 1980s.

Stanford popped up first in Montserrat, a British colony that became an offshore banking hotspot, much to the concern of the Bank of England and Scotland Yard. Stanford formed the Guardian International Bank there in 1985. However, the British authorities decided banking was not what Montserrat really needed and closed down a number of the brass plate banks operating there. No such action was taken against Stanford or Guardian, but the Texan decided to transfer his banking ambitions to Antigua where Guardian became the Stanford International Bank (SIB) in 1990.

Stanford soon became a big player in Antigua and a close friend to prime minister Lester Bird. He acquired a second domestic bank, the Bank of Antigua, which did a lot of business with the government, and a local newspaper, which supported the Bird family. Stanford also built a new airport and hospital. He launched an airline linking Antigua with nearby islands.

But following the 1997 European Union Bank closure and that of other Russian mafia-linked banks, the pressure came to shut down Antigua as an offshore financial centre. Bird asked Stanford to head up a move to reform Antiguan banking laws. Stanford financed the committee that advised the government.

This brought him into conflict with the Clinton administration, which wanted less secrecy and more co-operation from local banks and regulators. Stanford was appointed to the new proposed financial regulator – despite owning the biggest bank and so having a clear conflict of interest. This angered the Americans, especially when there was a Washington meeting in January 1999 attended by Antiguan representatives, some of whom were paid by Stanford.

US concerns grew when, a month later, rival bank records, together with details of trusts and companies, were removed by Stanford's people from the offices of the government regulator. The US chargé d'affaires in Barbados, Roland Bullen, cabled Washington about what he described as "Filegate Antiguan-style".

He said the Antiguan government appeared to have "ceded oversight of its offshore sector to an offshore banker and his minions... The American offshore banker responsible for transferring the files has apparently been engaged in a longstanding effort to undermine the authority of independent regulators... Prior to the blitzkrieg file removal there had been indications of the offshore banker's determination to wrest control over the files by any means... It appears that the US offshore banker is taking advantage of loopholes created by the new (anti-money laundering legislation) to seize the initiative and protect himself from any future inquiries or investigations that may come out of the US".

Referring to the removal of the files as a "power grab", the diplomat concluded: "This latest gambit appears to remove all doubt about who is in control of the offshore sector in Antigua."

Stanford was clearly the unidentified "offshore banker". His lawyer later stated that he was entitled to remove the records under the new legislation to protect them from loss or damage. However, American officials had to admit: "We've never been able to come up with anything on him." He had – and still has – not been charged with any offence or wrongdoing in any of the jurisdictions where the Stanford Financial Group operates and is regulated. Stanford declares that it abides by best banking practice and regulatory requirements.

Stanford denied that he had any of the intentions suggested in the cable and was working to improve relations between Antigua and the US. To prove this, in February 1999 he voluntarily handed over more than $3.1m belonging to a Mexican cocaine cartel which had been deposited in his bank in 1997. The money had been frozen by the bank in 1998 after investigations by US law enforcement. Stanford admitted that the bank "could have been more diligent in monitoring the accounts", but stressed that he was the victim of a smear campaign "designed to discredit me and my companies". The drug money had been frozen even though it was beyond the reach of American investigators who had identified the accounts. "It was the right thing to do morally and it is the legal thing to do," Stanford said.

Despite this, in April 1999 the US Treasury issued its second ever advisory notice, warning US banks to be extra cautious in doing business with banks in Antigua because of "intolerably lax money laundering controls". The British authorities followed suit.

Explaining the decision, senior US Treasury official James E Johnston wrote to prime minister Lester Bird that his government had "weakened its anti-money laundering laws to a point that they are now significantly below international standards". Moreover, "by permitting representatives of offshore institutions to be in effective control of Antigua and Barbuda's nominal offshore supervisory authority", it had compromised the authority's "independence and effectiveness".

Stanford responded: "I welcome public scrutiny of my actions" while admitting: "This is a rough and tumble business." He said he favoured tougher laws but was opposed to the Antiguan authorities becoming "financial policemen". He later supported the tougher US laws passed after 9/11.

Stanford resigned from the regulator and his representatives stepped down from the advisory body on new anti-money laundering legislation. The laws were tightened to US satisfaction. Most of the more than 50 offshore banks were closed. The US Treasury advisory was removed in 2001 and Antigua was also dropped from the list of bad tax havens by the Financial Action Task Force. It was, however, still criticized in 2000 by the OECD for assisting tax evaders. Antigua is now off that blacklist too.

Stanford has always denied buying any influence or being involved in corruption in Antigua. His influence survived the 2004 end of Antigua Labour Party and Bird rule by Baldwin Spencer's United Progressive Party. But last year Spencer strongly criticised Stanford's "haughty, arrogant and obnoxious behaviour", saying he was tired of the "threats, innuendos and now, downright political interference in our nation's affairs".

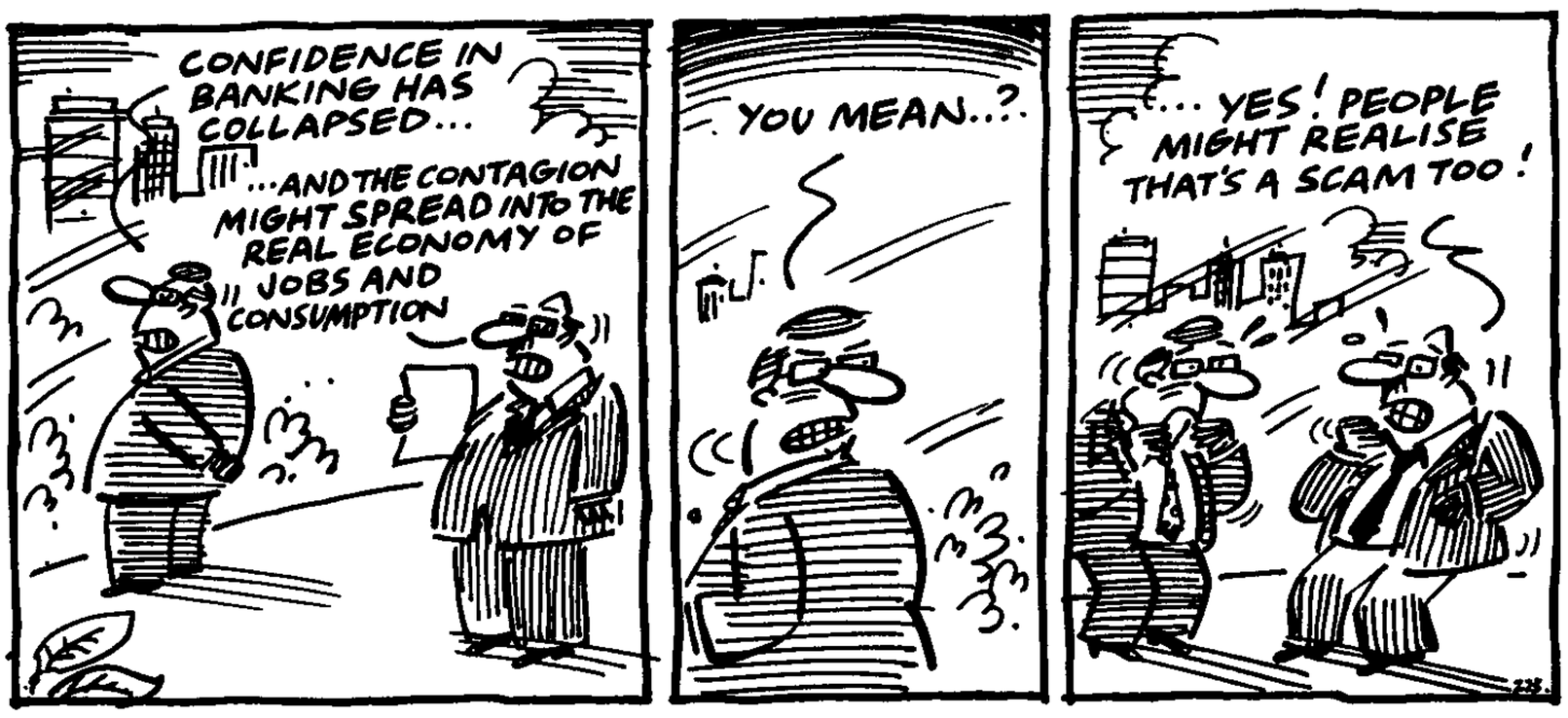
"I do not subscribe to the view that any person who feels that because he has a deep pocket and is a major investor can seek to run roughshod over the leaders who have been elected by the people of Antigua and Barbuda."

Stanford is also a player in US politics. He has been a generous donor to both Republicans and Democrats, giving, with employees, more than $2m since 2000. He donated $100,000 to President Bush's 2000 campaign and attended his inaugural party. He denies this is in any way related to US legislation, which has at times threatened both Antigua's offshore banking and

☛ *See over...*

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE & RIGG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NUMBER CRUNCHING

35% Rise in British Gas bills which parent company Centrica says is inevitable given "soaring wholesale energy prices"

418% Rise in profits of Centrica's gas production arm due to "soaring wholesale energy prices"

internet gaming interests. "In a democracy you have to put your money where your mouth is," Stanford explained in 2004. Washington lawyer Jack Blum, a veteran offshore observer, put it a different way. "He has been very aggressive not only in the political arena but in hiring people to tell everybody what a good guy he is."

Apart from cricket, golf, tennis and polo also benefit from Stanford's backing for marketing/branding purposes. The Texan has also given extensively to charity while living a billionaire lifestyle.

The basis for all this is the Stanford Financial Group of which Stanford International Bank is a part. SFG is described as "not a legal entity but a registered trademark which encompasses the global network of independent but affiliated, privately held and wholly owned entities". Stanford operates in the US, Canada, Switzerland and Panama, targeting individuals with a net worth of more than $1m.

SFG does not publish group financial figures, but SIB's 2007 accounts show deposits of more than $6.6bn from more than 50,000 depositors in 100 countries but mainly, it is believed, Latin America. Revenues were $789m and an operating profit of $44m. Most of these deposits – almost $4bn – were invested in certificates of deposit (CDs) on a one-year or more notice. The CDs are said to be invested in "investment grade bonds, securities and foreign currency deposits". Another $1bn was deposited on terms of up to three months. Against that cash balances were $627m with $5.6bn in "financial assets at fair value" realizable within one month. The majority of those assets were held in equities, which may raise questions given the fall in world stock markets this year. However, the key tier 1 capital ratio was a respectable 8.16 percent. The half year unaudited figures to end June showed deposits had grown to more than $7.6bn.

All very impressive. But critics might point to the few bankers with high-level outside experience on the small SIB board or the shortage of independent directors beyond Sir Courtney Blackman, former governor of the central bank of Barbados. There is also the issue of the extent of inter-group trading between the bank and other SFG companies. Then there is the question of whether the quality of Caribbean banking regulation is adequate for such a large and fast growing bank – given the failures already witnessed in the supposedly better regulated US, Britain, France, Germany and Switzerland. SIB is not audited by one of the major international beancounters – for what that may be worth – but by a local if respected Antiguan firm.

That said, Stanford says he runs everything more than by the book and no action has been taken against him or his companies by financial regulators. However, it was reported last month that the Securities & Exchange Commission in Washington had issued subpoenas to two former Stanford Group employees in Houston for information about the bank's CD sales. The disaffected former salesmen – who are suing Stanford Group – claim it did not fully disclose clients' offshore holdings. Stanford Group denies this.

Whether this or the current chaos in financial markets will sully the fully justified shiny image and reputation of cricket's saviour, Sir R. Allen Stanford, and the Stanford Financial Group remains to be seen.

'Slicker'

EYE CROSSWORD 371

by Cyclops

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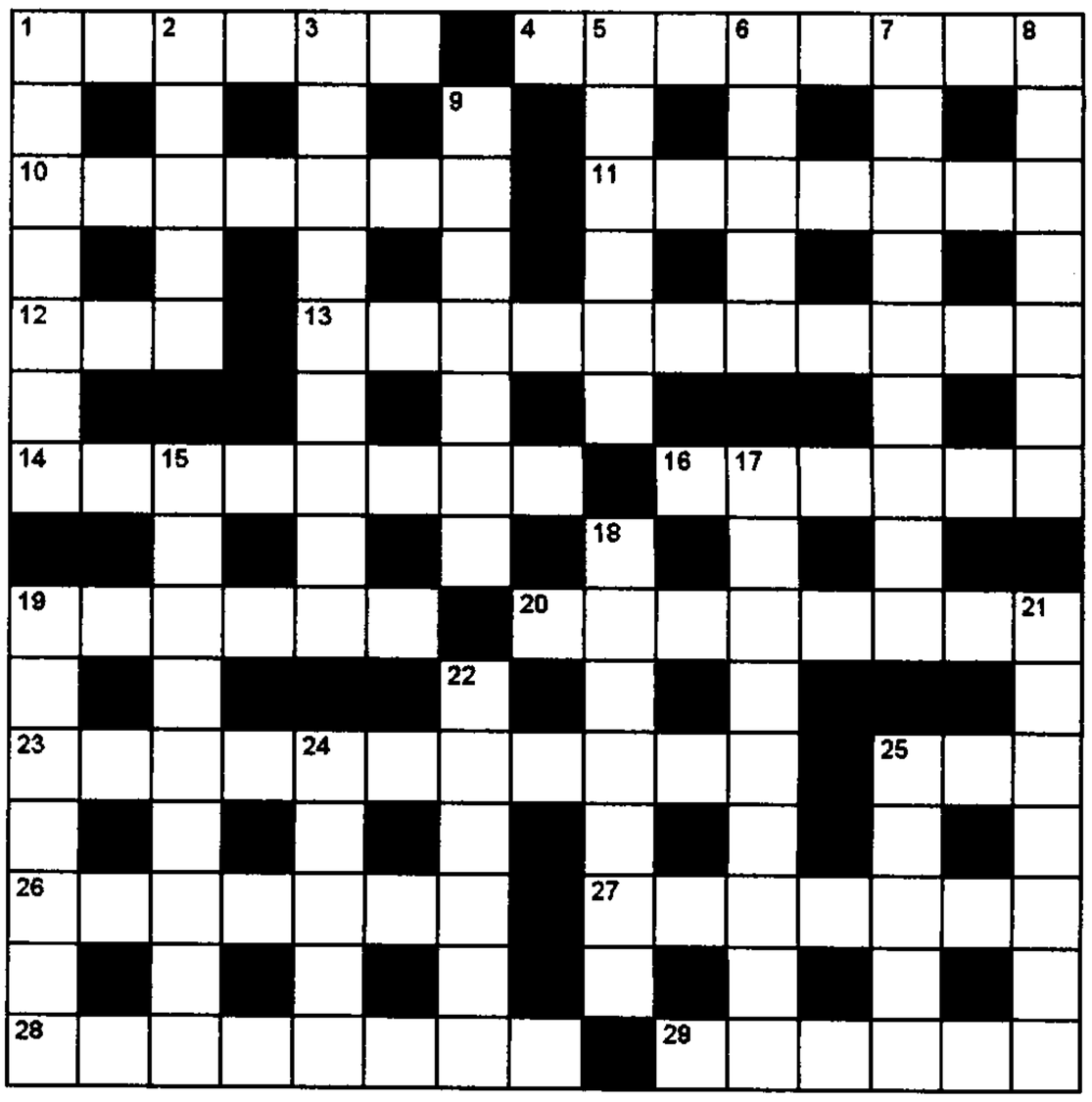

ACROSS

1 Claim climber's absorbed by lap dancing (6)
4 Be a crawler, having lost marbles, entertaining conservative (8)
10 Footballers get nothing for a set of balls (7)
11 Even thicker leader of Labour gets in (Brown-nose!) (7)
12/25 It would facilitate a warm-up between the sheets (6)
13 Ring to hold down members and lop off end of tool (indicator of what we think of politicians?) (7,4)
14/27 Book released, Blair, as it developed, favourite to be Brown's successor (8,7)
16 Leak afoot producing a tight session? (4-2)
19 Careless shepherd takes piss during dance (2-4)
20 House zap alien hard after Cherie's initial brazenness (8)
23 Married lives studies (by Right) get it wrong (11)
25 See 12ac.
26 Sound of an involuntary ejaculation is a hoot when broadcast (7)
27 See 14ac.
28 Runs article on Leon's lot (3,5)
29 Twit elected as partial cover for a body (6)

DOWN

1 In which 'X' and 'Y' often appear, in front of audience with kinky leg underwear (7)
2 Sweet being penetrated by Gold with erection puffed up (5)
3/24 Pussy, barefoot, hit the rocks (1,3,2,3,5)
5 Sound of Hawking's missing big money box (6)
6/17 Left out of traineeship Alan buggered up – bloody nuisance (1,4,2,3,4)
7 Arse, given drink, cheers (7,2)
8 Fear about pubic region organ protector (7)
9 It might stop clots screwing in Paris (7)
15 Laid-back Cyclops is not on top as a sexual partner? (9)
17 See 6dn.
18 Sham, devious Archer, giving away his ending, grabs publicity (7)
19 Flop, like Tory's opening rant (7)
21 Hung and quartered – protector of many an American? (7)
22 Really a call-girl's car? (6)
24 See 3dn.
25 Member is objectionable type (5)

Crossword 370 winner: MARTIN AXWORTHY

ACROSS: 1 Kowtow 5 Bungalow 9 Hectorer 10 Chesty 11 Arse 12 Counted out 14 Estate agents 17 Knee-trembler 19 Lebensraum 20 Shag 21 Barsac 23 Get a life 24 St George 25 Rattle.

DOWN: 2 One-armed 3 Tithe 4 Wire-cutters 5 Bermuda Triangle 6 NBC 7 Anecdotal 8 On tour 13 Thermometer 15 Tennessee 16 Dreadful 18 Pedant 20 Split 22 Cur.

YOBBETTES

HUSBAND

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It's our Louise, she's been drinking
How do You know?
Because she's coming up the garden path on all fours
Groan..

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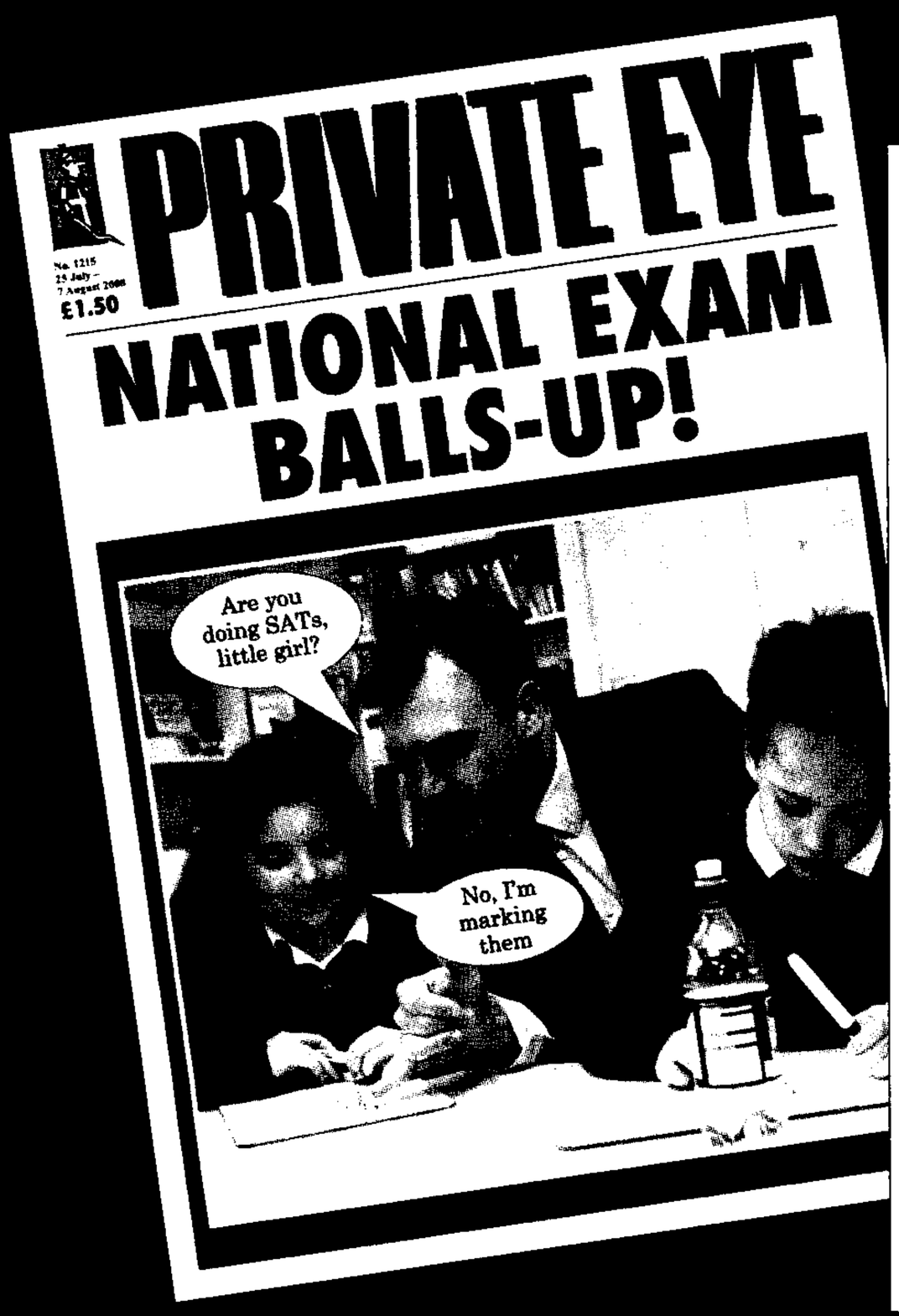

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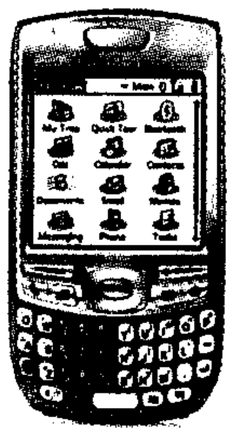

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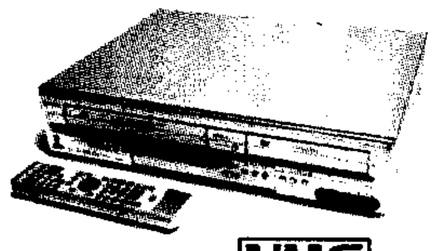

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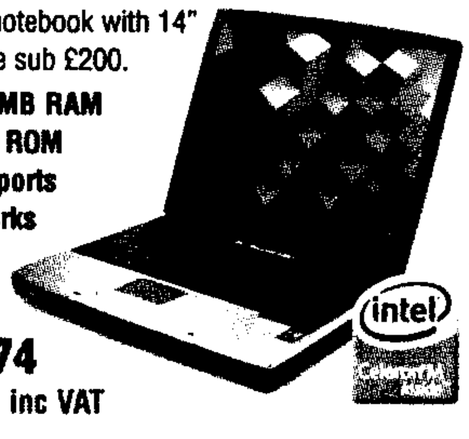
Warranty: 1 year warranty



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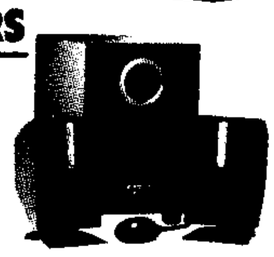

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- **Superb quality digital radio**
- **40W per channel output**
- **Large bright info display**
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Stock status: Factory rework stock
Warranty: 1 year warranty

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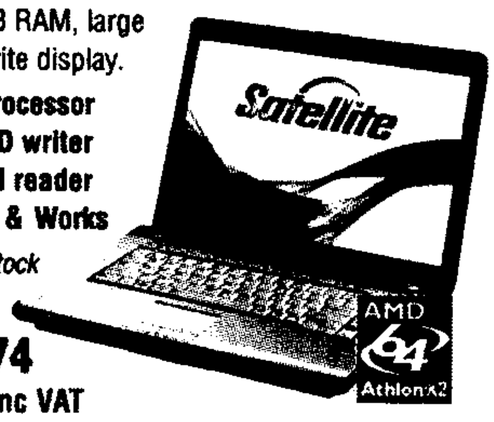
AMD Dual Core notebook with 2GB RAM, large 120GB drive and widescreen TruBrite display.

- **AMD Athlon X2 64 Dual Core processor**
- **2GB RAM, 120GB drive and DVD writer**
- **Wireless networking, flash card reader**
- **Windows Vista Home Premium & Works**

Stock status: Toshiba factory rework stock
Warranty: 1 year warranty



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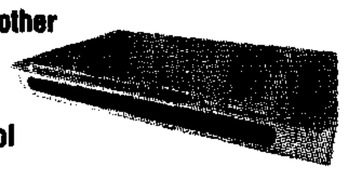

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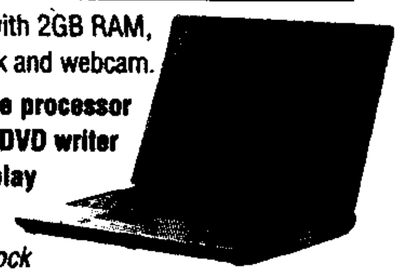

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Stylish piano black Dual Core AMD notebook with 15.4" BrightView display, webcam and WiFi network.

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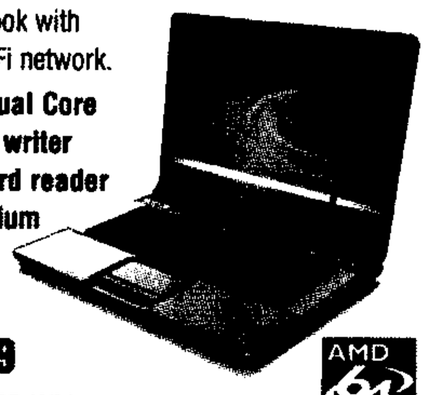
- **nVidia GeForce 7150M graphics, card reader**
- **Microsoft Windows Vista Home Premium**

Stock status: Factory rework stock
Warranty: Six month warranty



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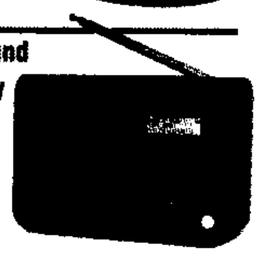

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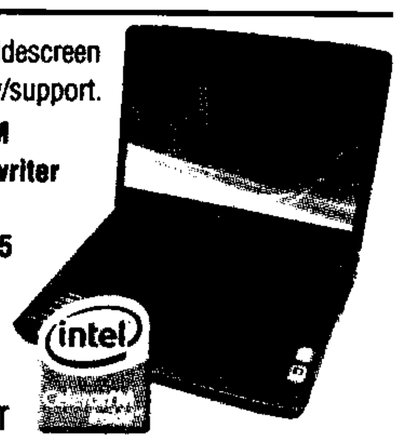

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- **Wall mountable design**

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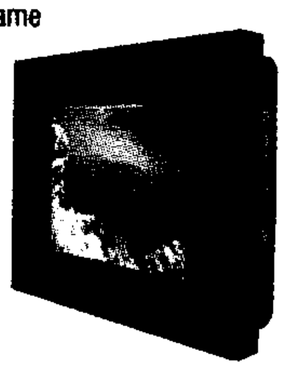
Warranty: 1 year warranty



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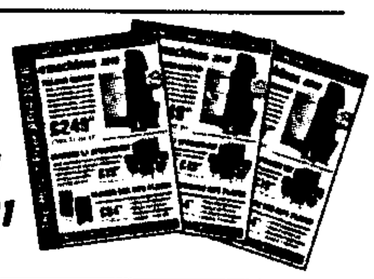

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zimbabwe a national emergency

(Registered Charity No. 1112949)

As the Zimbabwe tragedy unfolds, you may be frustrated wondering what you can do to help? You can support ZANE.

ZANE is still providing aid to many thousands of people across Zimbabwe. We need your help in assisting those who are trapped there.

Barbara Humphreys* (87) was starving in Harare. She wept with gratitude when we prepared a meal for her. She told us her story:

Sixty-four years ago Ralph Humphreys left Barbara after one idyllic week of honeymoon to fight in Hitler's war. On 12th of February, 1944, Ralph (25) was drowned on the troopship "Khedive Ismail", en-route to Ceylon. Barbara never remarried.

Barbara says: "It never felt right, as it did with Ralph". Barbara says that each day she says "hello" to her sweetheart's picture of Ralph smiling shyly in the African bush. The picture is more or less all she has in the world. After a lifetime of prudence, the raging level of 7M% inflation has driven her into penury. She was too proud to turn to "charity". It took a lot of persuasion to convince her that it was a privilege for us to be able to help her. Now, albeit reluctantly, she accepts that.

Please act today!

- The inflation blight has rendered all savings worthless: prices double each day. ZANE staff are working flat out supplying food and medicines to people like Barbara.
- People like Barbara's Ralph gave selflessly to the free World from 1939-45. Now, in extreme old age, there are many who have nowhere to turn other than our excellent ZANE staff and the kindness of donors. ZANE has discovered that many, like Barbara, have no living relatives.
- Zimbabwe's economic situation will remain desperate for many years to come. The number of those seeking aid is outstripping our slender resources. Last year ZANE made grants to over 7,000 people and we need to raise more money for vital food and medicines.
- ZANE has a first class team on the ground with systems in place that ensure that every pound donated is used to maximum value. Thus we are highly effective under dire circumstances.
- ZANE employs no full time staff in the UK. It relies wholly on public support. There are no middlemen and there is no waste.

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PS ZANE is a UK registered charity.

* the names have been changed on grounds of security

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want to help the people of Zimbabwe continue to get vital aid and support

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Name . . . . . .

Signature . . . . . Date . . . . . .

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To: The Manager _____

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Address _____

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Name(s) of Account Holder(s)

Bank/Building Society account number

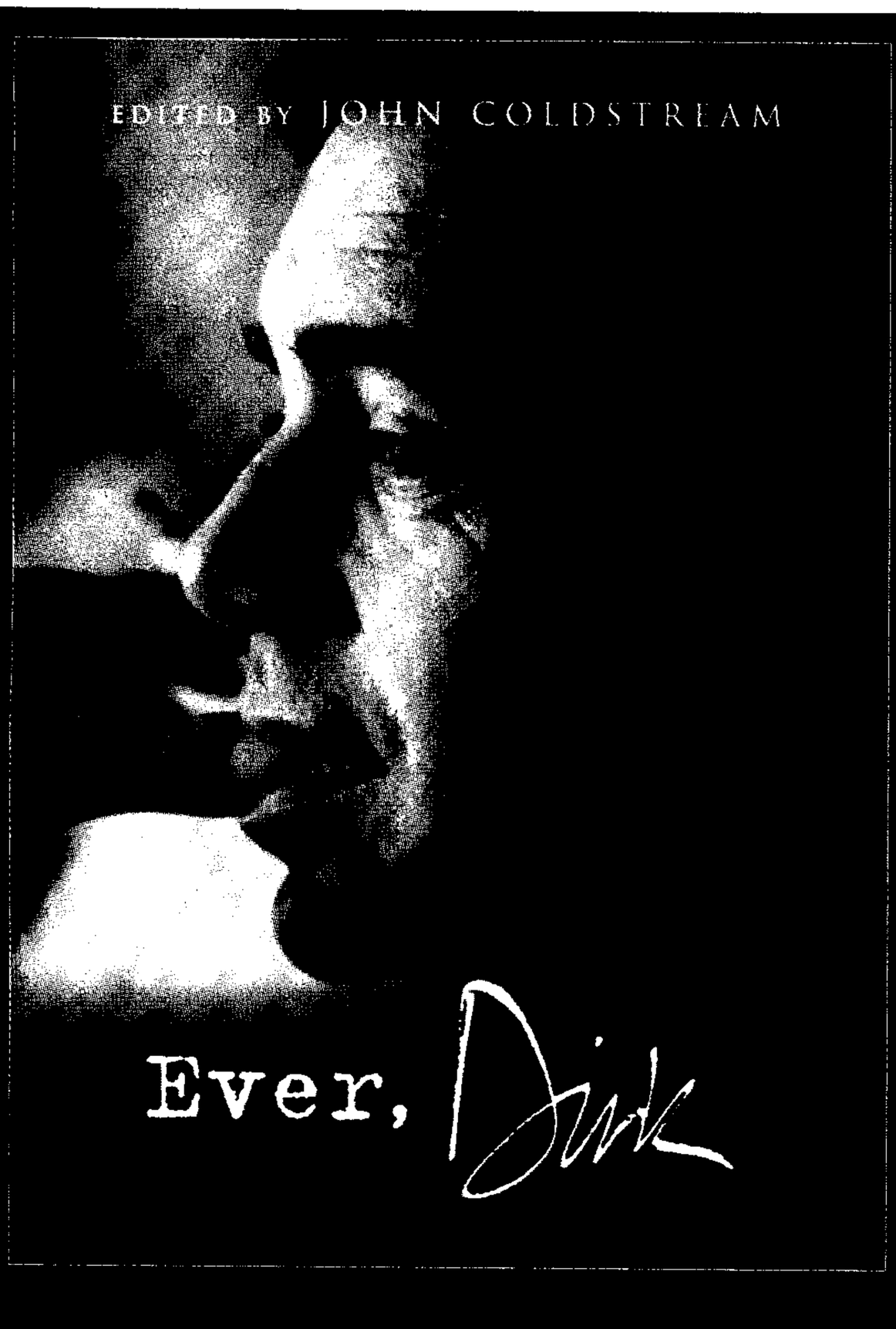
Branch Sort Code

Reference Number

Signature(s)

Private Eye August 2008

EDITED BY JOHN COLDSTREAM



Ever, Dirk

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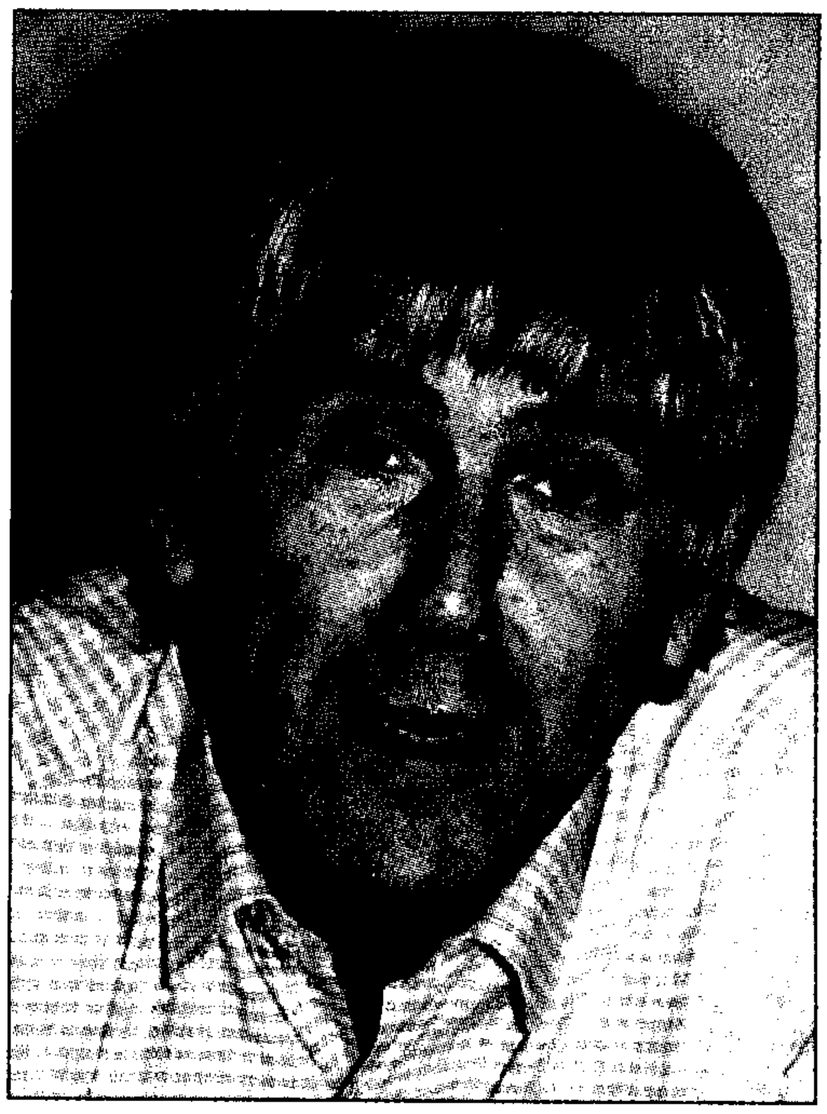

For the fourth year running *Private Eye* and *The Guardian* are awarding a prize for investigative/campaigning journalism in memory of Paul Foot.

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BURNING AMBITION to help young people into work! Need resources. Thanks. S/C: 832845. A/C: 00231470.

RUSSIAN STUDENT in desperate need of help with funding her MA print journalism course. Will appreciate any *help. Fees £10,300.* mbelchikova@yahoo.co.uk HSBC, S/C: 40-05-00. A/C: 74518462.

AT WITS' END! Financial assistance desperately required. Please help. Halifax, S/C: 11-13-01. A/C: 00116878.

HARDWORKING HONEST MAN cleaned out by ex-wife, fleeced by business partner for remainder, needs £50K to get life/work back on track. Lloyds TSB, S/C: 30-95-47. A/C: 00250670.

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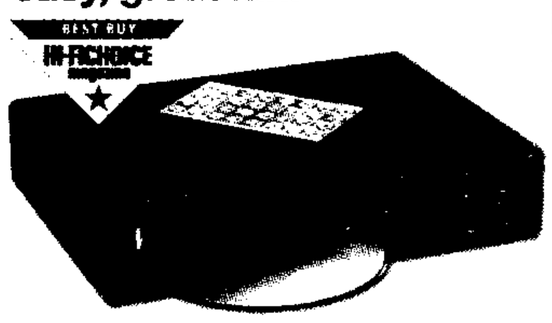

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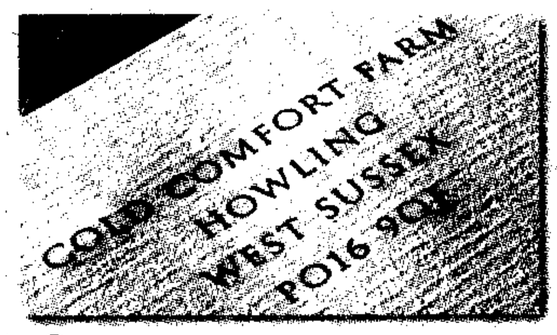

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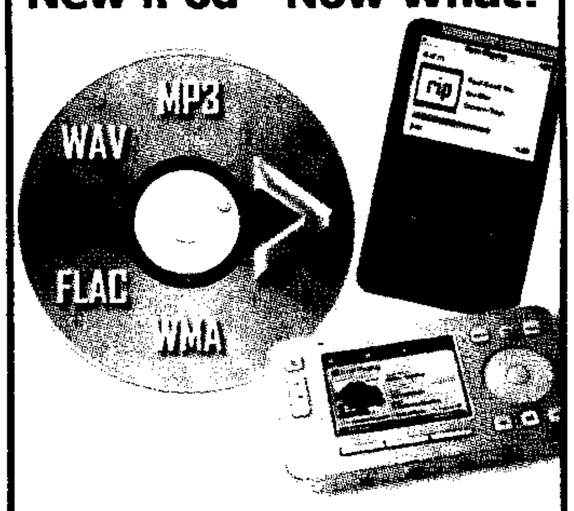

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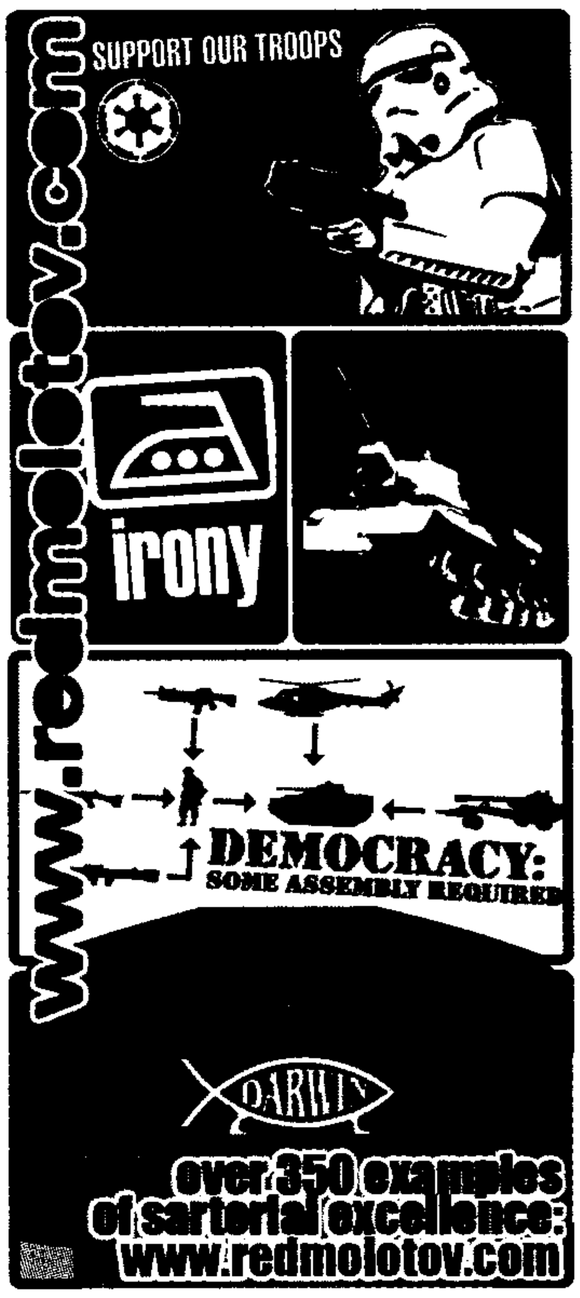

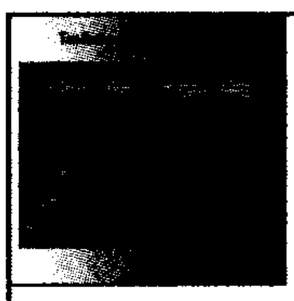
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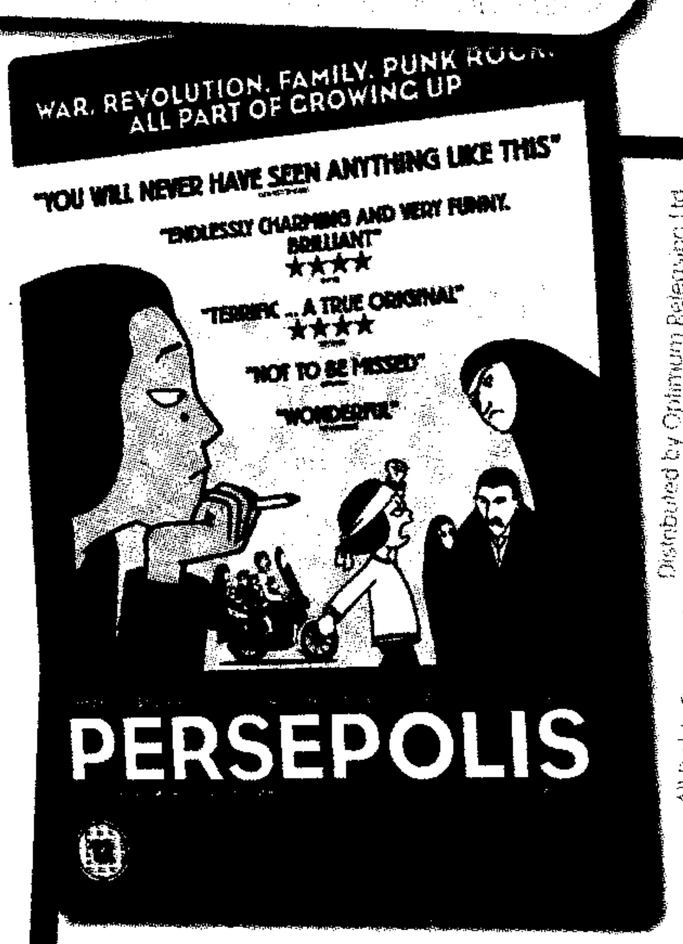
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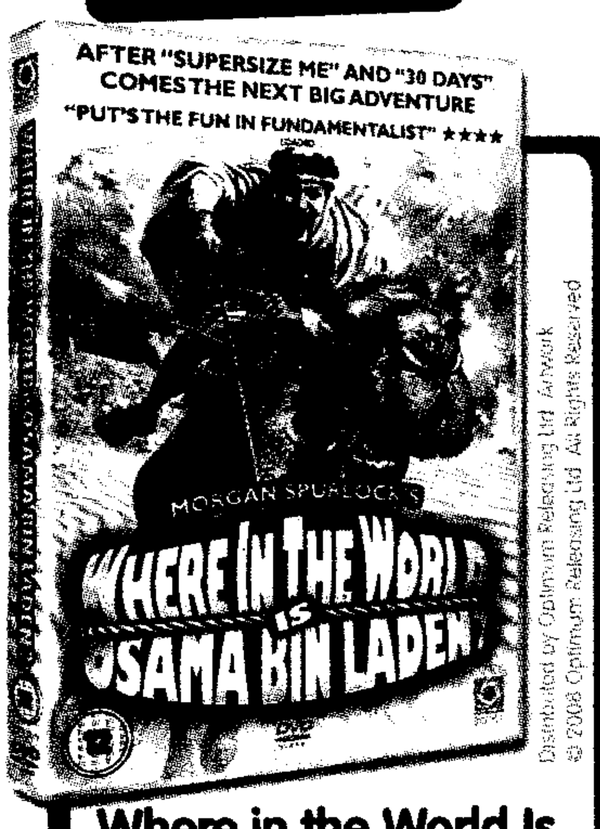
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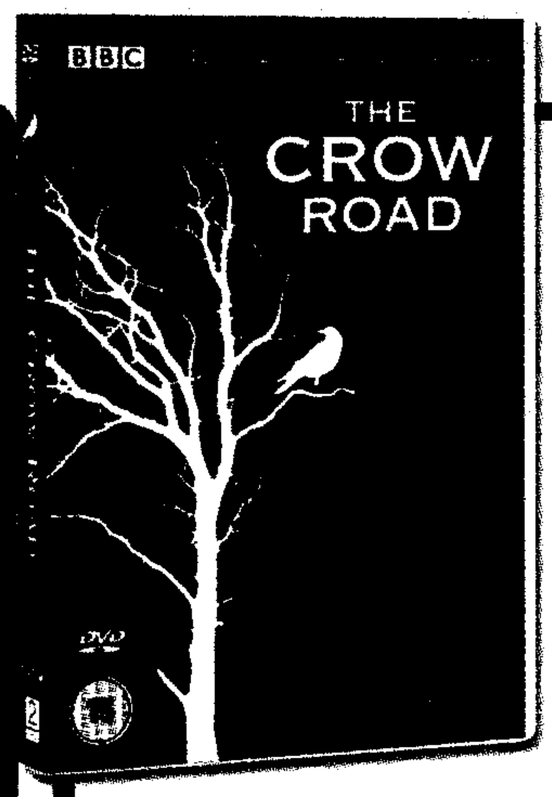

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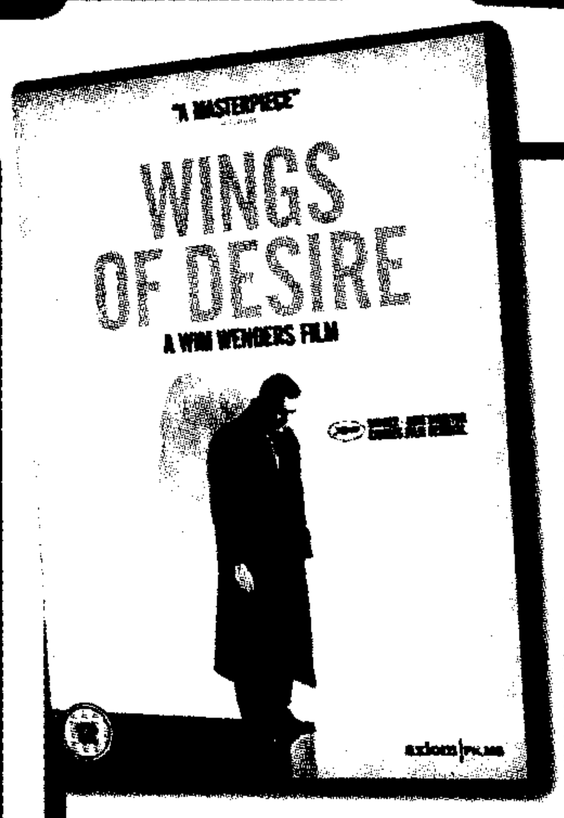

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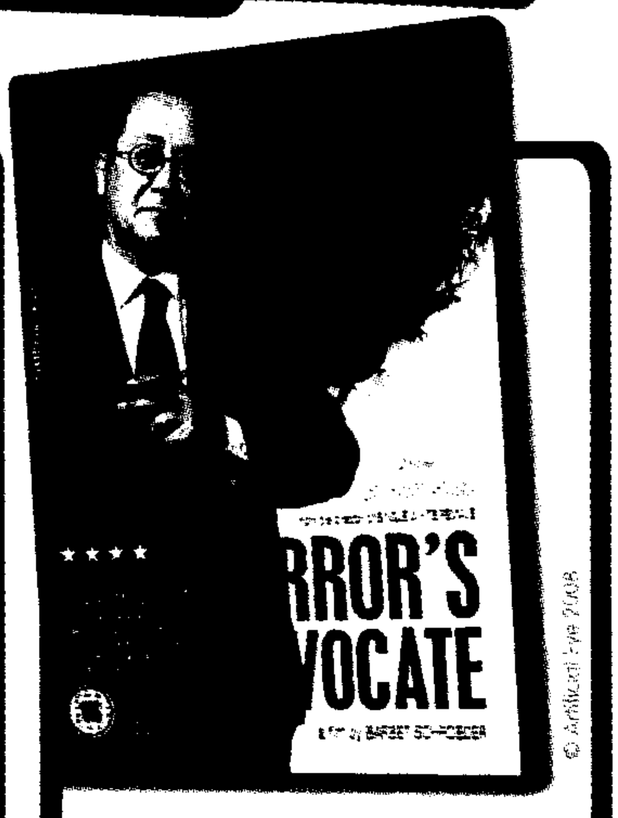

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